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Records tumble for Harry Kane as he sends England into the Round of 16

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SALAR

DIGITAL ENGLISH DAILY, BENGALURU

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Fuel prices will be cut only if oil rates stay down: Puri

NEW DELHI, 2 JULY

Oil marketing companies suffered Rs 74,781-crore losses for selling petrol, diesel and LPG below cost for the period up to June 30 when global crude oil prices spiked in the wake of the West Asia conflict, Union Petroleum Minister Hardeep Singh Puri said on Thursday.

On whether there would be a cut in prices of petrol and diesel, Puri said this would be a legitimate question if oil prices stayed low for the next few weeks.

International crude oil prices have come down but companies are still processing crude they bought at the height of the West Asia crisis, Puri told reporters.—*PTI*

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Rethink before sowing: DKS tells farmers

BENGALURU, 2 JULY

Chief Minister DK Shivakumar has portrayed a grim picture of the monsoon this year and appealed to the agrarian community to rethink before sowing.

Briefing reporters after the cabinet meeting, Shivakumar said there is inadequate inflow of water in the dams. The chief minister said farmers should not depend on the reservoirs this year until they are filled up completely.

"Drought problem appears to be growing big. There is more than 20 per cent deficiency in the inflow of water in the dams this year compared to last year," Shivakumar said. —*PTI*

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AI cuts int'l fuel surcharge as West Asia flights resume

NEW DELHI, 2 JULY

Air India has reduced fuel surcharges on flights to North America, Australia, Europe and the UK after easing oil prices, while Air India Express has resumed services to Oman and Kuwait following disruption caused by the West Asia conflict.

Effective 1 July, Air India has cut the fuel surcharge for North America and Australia flights to USD 200 from USD 280 per ticket, while the surcharge for Europe and UK services has been reduced to USD 125 from USD 205, sources said. The Air India Group had introduced fuel surcharges on 7 April.

Domestic surcharges ranged from Rs 299 to Rs 899, while international levies ranged from USD 24 to USD 280.

Meanwhile, Air India Express has restored services to all its destinations, with flights to Oman and Kuwait resuming. —*PTI*

Mehbooba, Khurshid to attend Khamenei's funeral

NEW DELHI, 2 JULY

People's Democratic Party (PDP) president Mehbooba Mufti and Congress leader Salman Khurshid will attend the funeral of the country's late Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei.

Prime Minister Modi on Thursday spoke with Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian to convey his condolences on behalf of the Government and people of India following the death of Ayatollah Ali Khamenei and other Iranian officials and citizens during the recent conflict. The Indian delegation will be led by Bihar Governor Lt Gen (Retd) Syed Ata Hasnain and Minister of State for External Affairs Pabitra Margherita.

Khamenei will be buried on 9 July at the Imam Reza shrine. —*Agencies*

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7 killed as boulder crushes workers at Bengaluru quarry

DKS orders statewide quarry audit, guidelines

BENGALURU, 2 JULY

Seven migrant labourers, including five from Madhya Pradesh, were killed and five others injured after a massive granite rock slid from a quarry and crushed workers at Madapattana in Bengaluru Urban district on Thursday. Four labourers escaped unhurt.

Police initially identified most of the victims as being from Bihar but later clarified that five were from Madhya Pradesh, while one each hailed from Chhattisgarh and Yadgir.

Deputy Inspector General (Central Range) S Girish said 16 labourers were working at two crusher units when the accident occurred. "A drilling machine was operating on the upper level when a huge rock slid down and fell on those working below," he said.

Cops registered a case against the quarry managers D Anandaswamy, Udayashankar, Pandu and Tirupathi.

The deceased are Ramu, Rajpal Singh, Satyanarayan Singh, Ramavtar Singh, Dharmesh Singh, Rajesh Prasad Chaudhary and Bhuvaneshwari Singh Gond.

An official from the Mines and Geology Department, Rangappa, said the quarry owner had agreed to pay Rs 10 lakh as compensation to the families of each deceased worker and Rs 5 lakh to each injured labourer.

Crushed tractors and debris lie at the site after a massive rock collapsed at a stone quarry in Bengaluru on Thursday —*SALAR*

A family member of the deceased worker from Yadgir said they had moved to Bengaluru to repay debts incurred after their daughters' marriages and had now lost their sole breadwinner. The impact of the accident also left loading vehicles mangled, while a tractor was smashed into pieces.

CM DK Shivakumar announced fresh quarrying guidelines and said authorities would examine whether operations were being carried out in accordance with safety norms and carry out a statewide audit. Preliminary findings suggested the collapse was caused by soil erosion rather than blasting, though a detailed inquiry had been ordered.

Deputy Chief Minister G Parameshwara said the government would investigate the approval process for quarrying licences and act against any irregularities. Union Minister HD Kumaraswamy alleged a "big lobby" prioritised profits over workers' safety, while Leader of Opposition R Ashoka accused the government of failing to enforce safety regulations after visiting the injured in hospital. —*PTI*

Not reserving high-profile names: WhatsApp

NEW DELHI, 2 JULY

WhatsApp has dismissed as "false" claims that people are reserving popular or well-known usernames, saying usernames linked to public figures can only be claimed by their legitimate owners.

The clarification came after the Centre served a notice on Meta over WhatsApp's proposed username feature, asking the company to pause its rollout pending consultations. WhatsApp said that names of public figures, government entities, celebrities, verified Meta accounts and lookalike variants have been reserved exclusively for their rightful owners.

The company said users will still need a phone number to use WhatsApp. It also highlighted safeguards, including limits on messages from unknown users, protection against username guessing, abuse detection systems and alerts indicating whether a first-time sender is a new account, a contact, a mutual group member or is based abroad.

TELEGRAM, SIGNAL

Meanwhile, the IT Ministry has also sent notices to Telegram and Signal, seeking details on how their existing username features address fraud and impersonation concerns. Sources said Telegram has been asked why it should be allowed to retain the feature. —*PTI*

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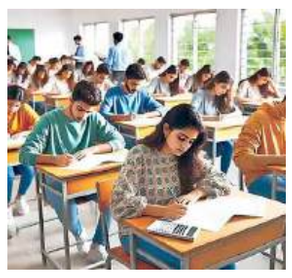
Board exams may get 50% weightage in NEET & JEE

NEW DELHI, 2 JULY



Board exams may be given 50 per cent weightage in admissions presently based on scores of entrance exams like NEET and JEE, according to sources.

The possibility is being contemplated with an idea of reducing the high-stakes nature of any exam, be it entrance tests for medical and engineering admissions or board exams.

The move comes after a series of anomalies in the examination system, including evaluation errors and paper leaks, have kick-started a debate on the credibility of the system. At present, medical and engineering admissions are based on entrance test scores and candidates are required to score a qualifying percentage in board exams to be eligible.

The reforms are being considered by the Ministry of Education's nine-member committee set up last year to examine students' dependence on coaching, the spread of "dummy schools" and fairness in high-stakes entrance tests. — *PTI*

RE-NEET UG RESULT BY 20 JULY

NEW DELHI, 2 JULY

The result of the re-National Eligibility-cum-Entrance Test (NEET-UG) will be announced by 20 July, a senior official at the NTA confirmed.

The official did not provide an exact date but confirmed that the agency is working on a war footing to release results soon. The official, however, assured that the academic year for MBBS students will not be delayed.

The NTA had released the provisional answer key on 25 June, and candidates were given time till 28 June to challenge it. As per the official, around 10,000 challenges were received.

Now, the NTA is working to address the challenges submitted by aspirants. When asked how this process is carried out, the official said, "We scan all the challenges, examine the evidence, and respond to each one of them."

A fee of Rs 200 is charged per question and is refunded if the student's challenge is found to be correct. — *ANI*

JD(S) alleged that, instead of conducting door-to-door verification, BLOs gathered large groups of people at a hall in Ramanagara—*SCREENGRAB*

K'TAKA TO MOVE SC AGAINST SIR

BENGALURU, 2 JUNE

Chief Minister DK Shivakumar on Thursday said the State government will approach the Supreme Court challenging the Special Intensive Revision (SIR) of electoral rolls. He said the Cabinet has already passed a resolution, escalating the political confrontation over the Election Commission of India's month-long voter verification exercise.

Meanwhile, JD(S) leader and Union Minister HD Kumaraswamy alleged irregularities in the SIR process in Karnataka, particularly in Ramanagara district. He claimed a "massive scam" was underway, citing video evidence, and demanded the suspension of the Ramanagara Deputy Commissioner and officials involved. Kumaraswamy alleged that illegal Bangladeshi migrants were being facilitated to obtain voter documents, claiming that over 25 lakh such nationals were living in Karnataka and more than 10,000 in Ramanagara. He alleged that, instead of door-to-door verification by Booth Level Officers (BLOs), large groups were gathered at a community hall in Tippu Nagar where the SIR process was conducted collectively under political influence.

Responding to the allegations, Shivakumar said every BLO must conduct door-to-door verification and warned against misuse of the process by political parties. He said Booth Level Agents (BLAs) have been given the role of collecting forms and educating voters before submitting them to BLOs. "That duty they must perform properly," he said, adding that the government's stand is to ensure that every eligible citizen retains their voting rights and right to live with dignity. —*Agencies*

India, Japan eye ¥10 trillion trade

NEW DELHI, 2 JULY

India and Japan on Thursday agreed to deepen cooperation in trade, technology, energy and defence, setting a target of mobilising 10 trillion yen in Japanese investment into India over the next decade following talks between Prime Minister Narendra Modi and his Japanese counterpart, Sanae Takaichi.

Addressing a joint press conference after the 16th India-Japan Annual Summit, Modi said the two countries would also work to double the number of Japanese companies operating in India over the next 10 years.

Modi said the two sides had agreed to strengthen cooperation in artificial intelligence, metals, energy, defence and economic security. Around 120 new business agreements were signed, while Japanese investments worth nearly USD 10 billion had been committed to India over the past year.

He also welcomed the first India-Japan co-development defence project involving the naval Unified Complex Radio Antenna (UNICORN) and said several institutions in India's AI ecosystem had signed agreements with Japanese partners.

Takaichi announced 129 private sector cooperation agreements involving investments exceeding JPY 2 trillion. She also unveiled a joint green ammonia production project with an annual capacity of around 400,000 tonnes.

Other agreements covered pharmaceuticals, political devices, battery technologies, and the expansion of biogas and organic fertiliser.

Takaichi is on a three-day visit to India from 1-3 July at Modi's invitation, aimed at further strengthening the India-Japan Special Strategic and Global Partnership. —*ANI*

>>>More on Page 3

Japan's PM Sanae Takaichi tries to play 'santoor' as PM Prime Minister Narendra Modi looks on—*PTI*

K'taka HC stays withdrawal of 52 criminal cases by Cabinet

BENGALURU, 2 JULY

Karnataka High Court on Thursday stayed the government's decision to withdraw prosecution in 52 criminal cases, including those linked to the 2022 communal violence at the Ladle Mashak Dargah in Kalaburagi district.

A Division Bench headed by Chief Justice Vibhu Bakhru prima facie found fault with the government's invocation of Section 321 of CrPC, noting it appeared contrary to an earlier High Court order. The court issued notices to the state government and the Directorate of Prosecution, seeking responses within two weeks.

The petition, filed by advocate Girish Bharadwaj, challenged the 27 May government order and the Cabinet's May 21 decision. The Cabinet had approved withdrawal of cases involving farmers, pro-Kannada activists and others, including at least eight linked to the Aland riots.

Home Minister Priyank Kharge said the government had followed the same procedure adopted by previous administrations and would study the High Court's order before taking further action. He added that the list also included BJP workers and leaders. —*PTI*

Ram Temple row: Champat blames aide for theft

AYODHYA, 2 JULY

Sources said former Ram Temple trust official Champat Rai has blamed his aide and former driver Ramshankar Yadav alias Tinnu Yadav as the key figure in the alleged donation embezzlement case, claiming he misused trust and leaked information to a Samajwadi Party leader when about to be caught.

Yadav is among eight arrested accused .

Rai has also indicated he will not continue amid the "stigma", telling close associates his service in Ayodhya is complete and that the trust has been betrayed, sources added.

Separately, ahead of a key meeting of the Shri Ram Janmabhoomi Teerth Kshetra Trust on 6 July, a priest alleged Rai and his "gang" illegally grabbed control of the shrine using forged documents and sought action against him. —*PTI*

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QUASHES VERDICT

AI-hallucinated judgments have no place in courts: SC

NEW DELHI, 2 JULY

Red flagging the use of "non-existent, fake, and hallucinated" judgements generated by artificial intelligence (AI), the Supreme Court on Thursday set aside a verdict of the National Company Law Tribunal (NCLT), saying that courts must adopt zero tolerance against citing or using AI-generated precedents.

Justices PS Narasimha and Alok Aradhe said, "The production of fake, non-existent material and its utilisation as precedents in law, is like the release of methyl Isocyanate in the province of law and justice."

It set aside an NCLT judgement on Essel Infraprojects insolvency after finding that the tribunal had relied on non-existent, fake precedents generated through AI tools.

The bench said it was equally a "serious lapse" if a judge relies on such a fake or hallucinated AI-generated material as precedents in support of the determination.

"We have no hesitation in declaring that such a decision is no decision in the eyes of the law, irrespective of whether such material had a direct or indirect bearing on the decision-making. Such decisions are to be set aside even if an iota of fake or hallucinated material enters the decision-making process, as it would violate the sanctity of adjudication," it said.

The bench said it is absolutely necessary to maintain integrity in decision-making.

"And we reiterate and declare zero tolerance for the Bar as well as the Bench to cite, refer to, or rely on such material. It is also clarified that our judgment shall have no bearing on the rightful use of AI," it said. — *PTI*

—ANI

Govt earmarks Rs 117cr to tackle El Nino rain deficit

BENGALURU, 2 JULY

Rural Development and Panchayat Raj Minister Eshwar Khandre on Thursday said the Sstate government has released Rs 117 crore in advance to tackle drinking water shortages caused by El Nino-related rainfall deficits. "A comprehensive action plan worth around Rs 85 crore has already been prepared. About Rs 30 crore has already been spent, and measures have been taken to ensure uninterrupted drinking water supply to villages facing water scarcity," Khandre told press. Assuring the public that there is no shortage of funds for water supply, he urged residents to use water judiciously and prevent leakage. "Officials have been instructed to resolve any drinking water issue in a village within 24 hours." —*PTI*

Man kills granny to keep drug peddling a secret

SHIVAMOGGA, 2 JULY

A 65-year-old woman, Sushilamma, was allegedly murdered by her grandson, Kishore, in Shivamogga after she planned to report his involvement in marijuana trafficking and drug abuse. The victim was attacked in Anand Rao Layout, Milaghatta Ward, on Wednesday evening. Police said Kishore pushed her to the ground and dropped a large stone on her head, leading to her death. Kishore, a habitual marijuana user previously booked for illegal betting and drug sale, was reportedly distressed over her intent to inform authorities. Doddapete Police Station registered a case.
—*SALAR NEWS*

—*X*

Create awareness about SIR, Gruha Jyothi: Cong MLC

BENGALURU, 2 JULY

Congress MLC and Vice Chairman of the State Guarantee Schemes Implementation Authority on Thursday urged the Guarantee Schemes Implementation Committees to actively participate in the creating awareness about the Special Intensive Revision (SIR) of the electoral rolls in the State and the Gruha Jyothi reverification drive. He asked committee members to create awareness about the revision process, assist citizens in filling forms, guide them on required documents, and encourage those aged 18 and above to enrol as voters. He also called for coordination with Booth Level Agents and local leaders to strengthen voter participation. Gooligowda said beneficiaries should also be informed about the ongoing door-to-door verification under the Gruha Jyothi scheme, during which officials will collect documents, including Aadhaar, voter ID, electricity account details and photographs.
He has also been assigned additional responsibilities following the demise of former vice chairman MN Suraj Hegde.—*SALAR NEWS*

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Street vendors will be relocated: KBG

On day 2 of demolition, govt says will distribute vehicles to vendors as their livelihood is hit

BENGALURU, 2 JULY

Even as Greater Bengaluru Authority officials continued demolishing alleged illegal structures that have encroached upon footpaths on Thursday, Greater Bengaluru Development Minister Krishna Byre Gowda said that the street vendors were being "relocated" and not evicted.

The City's street vendors, however, have alleged that the drive was "selective" and came without providing any alternatives. They said that their livelihood is affected.

During a virtual conference with officials reviewing the drive in the City, Gowda rejected the charge and cited the Supreme Court's recent ruling on footpaths, which said access to walking space was a fundamental right.

In a video message earlier in the day, he also claimed that around 300 pedestrians are killed annually in the country due to inadequate footpaths. He added that notices will be issued before any action and the government would follow the Street Vendors' Protection Act and Supreme Court guidelines.

"30 per cent of every 1,000 road accident deaths in Bengaluru are pedestrians," Gowda added.

However, dozens of vendors have alleged that they did not receive notices.

GBA officials cleared the Mango Mandi at JC Nagar as part of its safe footpath drive, in Bengaluru on Thursday; GBA tractors continue demolitions

MOHAMMED ASAD/X @GBA_OFFICE

> **We are not clearing all roads, but only major stretches which account for around 20 per cent of the roads. Business can continue on the remaining 80 per cent**
>
> -Krishna Byre Gowda, Bengaluru Minister

During his meeting, Gowda said that all encroachments would be cleared in a phased manner and that development works must begin immediately after.

Further, he said that a plan should be chalked out to launch a campaign to clear bulk construction debris and wild vegetation in the City after 15 July. From 10 July, the government would also begin clearing abandoned vehicles parked on the roadsides.

Gowda also instructed officials to provide information on permitting street vendors to conduct business on ward roads, excluding major arterial and sub-arterial roads.

Chief Minister DK Shivakumar, meanwhile, said that "We are relocating vendors who were on these footpaths to other streets. We are moving to distribute vehicles to street vendors. 37,000 people have registered. We have surveyed around 60,000 street vendors. Street vendors will be given space in other locations instead of on main roads."

He claimed that all MLAs, from the Opposition and the Congress, had agreed to this.

However, the BJP's X handle asked why the Congress had not created alternative provisions before launching the drive. —*Salar News*

NEW MLCs IN TOWN

Chief Minister DK Shivakumar and others pose for a photo with the newly elected MLCs at Vidhana Soudha in Bengaluru on Thursday *MOHAMMED ASAD*

MAJOR CABINET DECISIONS

- First-phase approval of Rs 320 crore (out of a total project cost of Rs 700 crore) given through KIADB for setting up a textile park in Kalaburagi with Central assistance.
- Rs 98.50 crore given for the Bilagi Lift Irrigation Scheme to provide irrigation facilities to 7,000 acres of agricultural land from the Krishna river in Bilagi taluk, Bagalkote.

- Rs 26 crore funding to strengthen eye care for young children under the National Programme for Control of Blindness.
- Rs 26 crore set aside for building a Tree Park on 60 acres at New Government Electrical Factory.
- Rs 33 crore in funding from the Minorities Department for distribution of sports uniforms and student materials.
- KIADB authorised to provide Rs 30 crore for setting up a Common Facility Centre at the Aerospace Park in Devanahalli under the Commerce and Industries department.
- New 5% reservation concession in KIADB under the Persons with Disabilities Rights Act. Two options, with the concession capped at either 10% of the land value or a maximum of Rs 20 lakh.

> **It has been decided to declare all roads as government roads. We will create the legal provision for this**
>
> -DK Shivakumar, Chief Minister

25 SCHOOL CHILDREN HOSPITALISED AFTER EATING WILD SEEDS IN GADAG

GADAG, 2 JULY

Twenty-five students of the government primary school at Beladhadi Tanda (Brahmanandapur) in Gadag taluk were hospitalised after consuming seeds of the wild Mara Audala plant on Wednesday evening, officials said.

According to preliminary information, a girl student distributed the seeds, collected from a tree located within the school premises, to students of Classes III and IV. A total of 25 children consumed the seeds.

After returning home, the children developed symptoms including vomiting and diarrhoea. Alarmed by their condition, parents rushed them to the Gadag Institute of Medical Sciences (GIMS) Hospital for treatment.

Doctors said the childrens' condition is stable and are likely to be discharged soon. —*Salar News*

Rethink before sowing: CM to farmers

BENGALURU, 2 JULY

Painting a grim picture of the monsoon this year, Chief Minister DK Shivakumar asked the agrarian community to rethink before sowing.

"Drought problem appears to be growing big. There is more than 20 per cent deficiency in the inflow of water in the dams this year compared to last year. I have told Ministers to visit two to three districts. I will also visit four divisions and review the situation," Shivakumar told press after a Cabinet meeting.

He said farmers should not depend on the nearly dry reservoirs this year until they are filled up completely.

"We see a big problem there. Farmers should not build pressure on us. Don't rely on the rainfall and do sowing. We cannot release water as there is no adequate rainfall," Shivakumar said.

He noted that Prime Minister Narendra Modi has warned that there will likely be an acute shortage of water.

He said that he has directed the district-in-charge ministers to ensure drinking water and adequate stock of fodder for cattle. Borewells will be drilled wherever there is an emergency.

POWER CRISIS

There will likely be a power crisis in the absence of water in dams for hydel power, Shivakumar added. "I have already instructed our departments to stock coal and other essential materials immediately so that there is no emergency later."

NO PRIVATISATION

Speaking on the issue of parallel and private power distribution, Shivakumar said: "I have told all ESCOMs that they must submit their objections to the government regarding the proposal to hand over power distribution to private players. Earlier, the BJP government had allowed private players to obtain licenses. Based on that, the Tata group has applied. Karnataka Electricity Regulatory Commission (KERC) will decide on this matter. The private party has not applied to the government — they have applied to KERC... I have instructed officials to say we do not consent to this." —*Salar News*

Farmers prepare paddy fields for sowing in a waterlogged field in Chikkamagaluru district, Karnataka, on Thursday —*PTI*

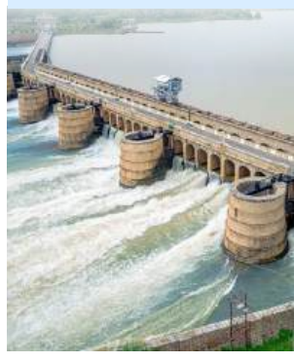
> **Over 50% of the State's 236 taluks are facing a drinking water shortage. Sowing should have taken place across 46.29 lakh hectares by the end of June, but it has occurred in just 13.33 lakh hectares (26%). Even in the sown lands, crops are withering due to lack of rain.**
>
> -BY Vijayendra, BJP President

RESERVOIRS NEARLY DRY

CM DK Shivakumar said that the reservoirs are nearly dry throughout the State, even in the Cauvery basin. Here's his data on the inflows:

DAMS	2025	2026
Hemavathi (TMCft)	88	40
KRS (TMCft)	100	22
Kabini (TMCft)	79	26

There is zero inflow of water into the Tungabhadra, Mallaprabha, Almatti, Narayanapura and Vani Vilas Sagar dams.
Overall, reservoir inflows have fallen to nearly 20 per cent of what they were.



Take war-like precaution, declare drought: LoP

BENGALURU, 2 JULY

Leader of Opposition in the Assembly R Ashoka wrote a letter to Chief Minister DK Shivakumar on Thursday urging him to take immediate "war-like" precautions and relief measures to manage the "drought situation in the State".

Ashoka noted that due to the rainfall deficit, sowing activities have been delayed and crops are at risk withering, severely impacting farmers and agricultural labourers.

"Agricultural labourers are migrating to cities and neighbouring states", the BJP leader alleged.

Ashoka drew the Chief Minister's attention to North Karnataka, where the declining water levels in reservoirs are especially felt, particularly in Belagavi and Bagalkot districts.

He questioned why the district in-charge Ministers have neither held a comprehensive meeting nor visited the affected taluks. Further, he asked why the Cabinet was yet to have an Agricultural Minister when "the livelihoods of lakhs of farmers are at stake". He said that the drought should not be politicised and asked Shivakumar to seek assistance from the Centre.

Hence, he called for a State-wide emergency plan for sowing, livestock protection, employment generation and water supply. Launch a scientific survey of crop losses and provide interim relief to farmers. —*Salar News*

GOVT TO START NEW 'PRAJA SEVA DEPARTMENT'

The Karnataka government will start a new department called 'Praja Seva Department', (Public Service Department), which will be headed by a Minister, CM DK Shivakumar said on Thursday. Along with that the State government will launch 'Praja Seva Abhiyana' where the Ministers will hold meetings in their respective districts twice in a month and conduct the PSA on the first and third Saturdays. People can register their grievances, which will be resolved. He said counters of all government departments will be set up there, and all officials concerned with that district must be present. —*SALAR NEWS*

TO PROTECT CHILDREN

Govt to inspect all daycare centres after viral torture video

BENGALURU, 2 JULY

Bengaluru Police Commissioner Seemant Kumar Singh on Thursday assured strict action after alleged abuse of toddlers surfaced at a daycare inside Capgemini's Brookefield campus. Police will also check whether other daycare centres are following prescribed rules.

An FIR has been filed against five women employees after a Child Protection Officer complained. Capgemini said it is temporarily shutting the on-campus daycare, citing employee and family safety.

The abuse came to light after videos, shared via WhatsApp and reported to the Child Helpline, showed toddlers

forced into a front-loading washing machine drum, sprayed with water jets in their mouths, and locked in bathrooms as punishment for crying.

Singh said police have sought a list of all such daycare units and whether they are authorised. It is unclear if the daycare is run directly by Capgemini or an external operator.

A Deputy Commissioner-rank officer has been assigned to investigate, working alongside the Joint Commissioner, East. "More than immediate arrests, our priority is to ensure that the perpetrators do not escape... No one will be spared," Singh said, adding that videos and CCTV footage are being verified.

The Karnataka State Commission for Protection of Child Rights has also taken up the issue after a complaint, and is expected to call for a report. —*PTI*

ISRO HQ receives bomb threat email, turns out hoax

BENGALURU, 2 JULY

A bomb threat email sent to the headquarters of ISRO here on Thursday triggered an extensive search operation, police said.

Police personnel, along with the dog squad and Bomb Detection and Disposal Squad (BDDS), rushed to the premises after the threat was received, they said. All staff were evacuated as a precautionary measure while a thorough search of the building was carried out.

Nothing suspicious was found during the operation, and the threat was later declared a hoax, a senior police officer said.

HOAX THREATS IN MYSURU ALSO

Mysuru District Court on Krishnaraja Boulevard in Chamarajapuram and Family Court in Jayanagar of the city also received bomb threat e-mails on Wednesday midnight. It was found to be a hoax after a police team and the bomb disposal squad rushed to both spots and evacuated and cordoned off the premises to conduct a thorough search on Thursday morning.

Mysuru District Bar Association president Lokesh urged the State government and police to take tough action in the matter. —*Salar News*

Two sisters beaten by 10 men, stabbed in Chintamani

CHINTAMANI, 2 JULY

An 18-year-old dance instructor and her younger sister were allegedly assaulted by a group of 10 to 12 people, including women, who also vandalised their house in Ashraya Extension on Tuesday night.

Meghana, a dance teacher at a government school, lodged a complaint. She said on 30 June, while leaving school with her sister, two youths named Karthik and Vinod tried to accost her.

Meghana slapped them in self-defence. That night, the group stormed her house and assaulted her. Meghana alleged Karthik stabbed her in the abdomen and neck, and Vinod kicked her after she fell. The woman dragged her by the hair, while her sister was restrained. Meghana is undergoing treatment. —*Salar News*

Rabri Devi vacates govt bungalow after two decades

PATNA, 2 JULY

Former Bihar chief minister Rabri Devi has shifted to her own house, relinquishing the government bungalow she occupied for nearly twenty years. The residence at 10, Circular Road, across from the Chief Minister's residence and near the Governor's House, was allotted by the Nitish Kumar government after she lost power in 2005. She had been asked to vacate last November when the house was designated as the Deputy CM's residence, but refused to move to 39, Hardinge Road, citing its size and perceived bad luck. She challenged orders to move to 38, Hardinge Road, but relented after opposition criticism. —*PTI*

TMC leader's son's cafe demolished for encroachment

KOLKATA, 2 JULY

A cafe owned by Imran Molla, son of TMC leader Saokat Molla, was demolished in South 24 Parganas for being built on encroached land. The district administration claimed the structure, Aranayer Kule, was constructed illegally on a sandbank of the Matla river after repeated notices. Despite furniture removal after notices, the structure was not dismantled, prompting action. Police and central forces oversaw the demolition, which was carried out following government norms after the owner failed to remove the structure within the stipulated time. The matter came to light via media reports, leading to examination of land documents and subsequent demolition —*PTI*

Mahua attacked: Akhilesh says BJP fostering violence

LUCKNOW, 2 JULY

Samajwadi Party leader Akhilesh Yadav condemned the alleged egg-throwing attack on TMC MP Mahua Moitra in Nadia, West Bengal, and accused BJP of fostering political violence.

Yadav urged the judiciary and the Speaker to act, calling the incident "highly condemnable". Moitra claimed BJP workers hurled eggs and shouted slogans outside Alifa Ahmed's residence, stating, "These are not ordinary people; they are BJP workers." Meanwhile, TMC leader Saugata Roy wrote to Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla, seeking intervention to ensure MPs' safety after Moitra's attack. Roy alleged she stayed on until the situation eased and that police remained silent spectators. He also expressed concern over attacks on TMC workers in West Bengal. —*PTI*

'Will teach lesson to tukde tukde gangs like CJP'

HYDERABAD, 2 JULY

BJP chief Nitin Nabin on Monday criticised the satirical political outfit "Cockroach Janta Party" during a visit to Telangana, saying "virus and cockroach people" form a "gang" linked to the "tukde-tukde mindset" that seeks to divide the country. He said such groups aim to weaken national unity and that only the BJP can "teach them a lesson". Targeting protestors, he said those with a "tukde-tukde gang" mindset cannot be considered India's Gen Z, as they challenge the Constitution, culture and national integrity. Nabin added that Indian youth are not anti-establishment or anarchic, but believe in nation-building. —*Agencies*

AIADMK exodus on, 3 ex-netas join TVK

BJP-style washing machine now in TN: DMK

C Vijayabaskar, MR Vijayabaskar and MSM Anandan joined TVK with their supporters –*PTI*

CHENNAI, 2 JULY

Three former AIADMK ministers —C Vijayabaskar, MR Vijayabaskar and MSM Anandan — along with former legislators, district leaders and hundreds of supporters, joined the ruling TVK on Thursday in the presence of general secretary 'Bussy' N Anand at Mamallapuram.

The inductees praised Chief Minister C Joseph Vijay's governance, while TVK Chief coordinator KA Sengottaiyan said they had joined the "right party" after becoming disillusioned with an AIADMK leadership functioning like a "corporate firm" rather than a political organisation. Expelled from the AIADMK last year, Sengottaiyan accused party chief Edappadi K Palaniswami of "betrayal" and alleged the AIADMK leadership had sought to align with the DMK.

Former health minister Vijayabaskar, who resigned as Viralimalai MLA, said the decision followed consultations with supporters and local leaders, blaming the AIADMK leadership's "wrong decisions".

Former transport minister MR Vijayabaskar and ex-MLA Anandan also cited dissatisfaction with the party leadership, with Anandan rejecting allegations of "horse-trading" and insisting the move was voluntary.

The mass defection triggered sharp reactions. DMK's Kanimozhi mocked the inductions, saying on X that a BJP-style "washing machine" had arrived in Tamil Nadu, referring to the alleged gutka scam involving Vijayabaskar. The DMK IT wing also highlighted the land-grabbing case against Vijayabaskar. AIADMK leader Gayathri Raghuram said inducting leaders facing corruption allegations undermined TVK's promise of clean politics.

Notably, Vijayabaskar, usually seen in AIADMK-coloured attire, appeared in trousers during the induction ceremony.

TVK'S AADHAV CLAIMS DMK-AIADMK ARE TYING UP

TVK general secretary and Public Works and Sports Development Minister Aadhav Arjuna claimed the DMK and AIADMK had reached an electoral understanding and that a formal announcement could come before the local body or Lok Sabha elections.

Both parties rejected the charge, with AIADMK leader Agri SS Krishnamurthy calling it "lies repeated for political gain" and DMK leader S Reghupathy denying any alliance plans.. —*PTI*

BJP accuses Priyanka of land grab as Cong flags Ujjain scam

NEW DELHI, 2 JULY

The BJP said on Thursday that Congress leader Priyanka Gandhi Vadra and her husband Robert Vadra were involved in an attempt to grab a four-acre plot in Uttarakhand, and that a 90-year-old woman was being threatened. Meanwhile, amid an alleged "land scam" in Madhya Pradesh, the Congress said on Thursday that the MP government should issue a white paper, order a probe supervised by a retired SC judge and that Chief Minister Mohan Yadav must resign.

BJP spokesperson Pradeep Bhandari said Robert Vadra's sister Saira Vadra is trying to grab a four-acre plot at Kichha in Uttarakhand. The land is in the name of late Kulsum Khan, and is now occupied by her 90-year-old sister, Nasreen Khan.

Bhandari said the Congress MLA of Kichha, Tilak Raj Behar, came to the property with around 100 supporters on Wednesday and asked Nasreen to vacate. Meanwhile, Madhya Pradesh BJP President Hemant Khandelwal and senior ministers dismissed the allegations against Yadav as "baseless," claiming that the Congress always tries to undermine OBCs. —*PTI*

AYODHYA DONATION SCAM

Lawyers seek FIR against Ram Temple functionaries

AYODHYA, 2 JULY

Lawyers of the Faizabad Bar Association on Thursday took out a protest march here and submitted a police complaint seeking an FIR against Ram Mandir Trust general secretary Champat Rai, trust member Anil Mishra and temple official Gopal Rao over alleged embezzlement of donation funds.

Krishna Mohan, another trustee, who was the complainant in the first FIR in the case, has also been mentioned as an accused in the lawyers' complaint to the police, according to Faizabad Bar Association president Kalika Prasad Mishra.

The bar association had earlier announced they won't defend the accused in this case and warned of a penalty of Rs 5 lakh per accused for any lawyer who wished to represent them.

Meanwhile, the Ayodhya Development Authority (ADA) has served a notice to the wife of Ram temple donation theft accused Lavkush Mishra over the alleged unauthorised construction of a house under her name, as the police intensified their investigation into the alleged embezzlement case, official and police sources said on Thursday.

According to ADA sources, the house under construction is located in Banvirpur village in Sohawal tehsil. The land was purchased in the name of Lavkush Mishra's wife, Supriya Mishra, and the construction was undertaken without obtaining the mandatory approval from the development authority.

Congress General Secretary KC Venugopal on Thursday wrote to Prime Minister Narendra Modi, demanding an immediate Supreme Court-monitored investigation into what he termed as the "Chanda Chori mega scandal".

Lawyers of the Faizabad Bar Association submit a police complaint seeking registration of an FIR against Ram Temple Trust general secretary Champat Rai, trust member Anil Mishra and Gopal Rao at Ram Janm Bhoomi Police Station, in Ayodhya, Uttar Pradesh, on Thursday –*PTI*

> **Ram ke naam pe vote to leinge, fir Ram ko hi woh looteinge (They will seek votes in the name of Ram and then loot Ram himself). Asli Hindu ye kya jaane, ye to farzi Hindu hain (What do they know of real Hindus, they are fake Hindus)**
>
> -Kapil Sibal, Rajya Sabha MP

Venugopal said a "fraud of this magnitude" which involves allegations stretching into hundreds of crores, is a "monumental betrayal" of the Hindu faith, religion, and way of life. —*PTI*

> **The Intelligence Bureau submitted at least 12 reports to PM Modi explaining how large-scale irregularities were taking place in construction, land transactions and offerings at the Ram Temple. He knew everything, yet remained silent...**
>
> -Arvind Kejriwal, AAP Convenor

TAKAICHI IN INDIA

India, Japan to cooperate on crude oil reserves, maritime energy transport

NEW DELHI, 2 JULY

India and Japan on Thursday agreed to deepen cooperation on strategic crude oil stockpiling, petroleum reserve mechanisms, and maritime energy transport value chains during Japanese Prime Minister Sanae Takaichi's three-day official visit here.

According to a joint statement issued by the Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas of India and Japan's Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry (METI) on Energy Resilience, both sides agreed to strengthen the voice of energy-consuming countries, including cooperation on market information-sharing, efforts for stabilisation, and exploring engagements for energy supplies from third countries as well as upstream investments.

On energy transport, both countries underlined the importance of resilient maritime logistics for oil and gas and agreed to explore collaborative opportunities, including joint investments across the maritime energy transport value chain.

Takaichi said that Prime Minister Narendra Modi's MAHASAGAR (Mutual and Holistic Advancement for Security and Growth Across Regions) initiative is closely aligned with Japan's updated Free and Open Indo-Pacific (FOIP) policy.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi receives Japanese Prime Minister Sanae Takaichi at Hyderabad House in New Delhi on Thursday –*PTI*

Takaichi clarified that the two leaders agreed to place three priorities at the centre of bilateral cooperation.

"First, to deepen the strategic cooperation between Japan and India," she said, adding, "Second, promotion of Japan-India cooperation in the area of economic security and energy security."

"Further, in the area of energy security impacted by the Middle East situation, both Japan and India bear the responsibility to provide for region-wide energy security, as I presented in Power Asia. That is why we have released a document for public and private sectors," Takaichi explained.

Speaking about clean energy cooperation, the Japanese PM announced a new bilateral initiative to support India's renewable energy ambitions.

"We are launching the Japan-India Cooperative Biogas for Growth, or CBG, that was introduced by Prime Minister Modi," she said.

She stated that there a vast biomass resources available in India's rural areas that remain largely underutilised and noted that the project reflects the shared commitment of both countries to promote sustainable energy solutions, strengthen rural economies and deepen bilateral cooperation in the clean energy sector. —*ANI*

Blot on democracy: Cong flags issues with NET papers

NEW DELHI, 2 JULY

Congress on Thursday criticised the government over issues with UGC-NET sociology and English question papers, saying Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan in office is a "blot on our democracy" as well as a reflection of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's "cynical political calculations".

In an X post, Ramesh says that this incident reflected the failure of the Modi government to conduct exams, and when it comes to exams handled by the National Testing Agency (NTA) itself, the track record continues to be atrocious.

He also added that questions in the UGC-NET english exam were from past papers with no changes, and the UGC-NET sociology question paper was full of spelling, translation, and grammar errors. He also shared a screenshot of media reports.

According to candidates, Ritzer was "Putzer", social was "oval", Parsons was "Parsow", Ghurye was "Ghunye", A R Desai was "A K Desai", Nussbaum was "Nusbaut" in the NET sociology question paper.

A candidate also claimed that 67 out of 150 questions in the English paper were identical to questions asked in the 2024 exam. And even the sequence of the answer options was reportedly unchanged. —*PTI*

TMC rebels meet EC, Mamata camp questions poll body

Trinamool Congress defectors, led by Ritabrata Banerjee, address the media after meeting the Election Commission in New Delhi Thursday –*PTI*

NEW DELHI, 2 JULY

The Ritabrata Banerjee-led rebel faction of the Trinamool Congress on Thursday said the full bench of the Election Commission gave it a "patient hearing" on its claim over the party, and expressed hope that the poll panel would respond shortly.

Banerjee said the delegation had formally placed its case before the poll panel after informing it about the faction's special organisational session held in Kolkata on 22 June. He also reiterated that the faction represented the "real" Trinamool Congress.

Meanwhile, the Mamata Banerjee-led camp questioned the Election Commission's decision to grant an audience to the rebel faction, alleging that the meeting violated the poll body's own procedures. It maintained that the latter are not authorised signatories of the Trinamool Congress.

Drawing a distinction between a political party and its legislative party, TMC leader Sagarika Ghose said the legislative wing was only one branch of the organisation and could not decide on a merger or split.

The meeting marked the latest development in the escalating battle for control of the Trinamool Congress. —*PTI*

CJP alleges police assault

NEW DELHI, 2 JULY

Activist Sonam Wangchuk's health deteriorated on the fifth day of his hunger strike at Jantar Mantar on Thursday, with his blood sugar level dropping to 60 and his blood pressure remaining low, even as the Cockroach Janata Party (CJP) alleged that police assaulted students attempting to set up a library at the protest site.

The agitation received fresh backing from CPI(ML) Liberation General Secretary Dipankar Bhattacharya and RTI activist Nikhil Dey.

CJP founder Abhijeet Dipke posted on X that the government would be responsible if anything happened to Wangchuk. He reiterated the demand for Union Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan's resignation.

Dipke also held an interaction with protesters titled "Chai Pe Charcha with Cockroaches", saying it was aimed at gathering feedback on "how we can make this movement better and bigger".

Later in the day, Dipke claimed on X that Delhi Police personnel assaulted two youths for attempting to set up a library at the protest venue and threw away books, including those on Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj and Bhagat Singh.

He demanded the suspension of ACP Ajay Sharma, alleging the officer had insulted the two historical figures and questioned why the police had acted against students "who only wanted people to read books at the protest site".

Dipke said police asked the students for proof that they had been assaulted. —*PTI*

CHANGES MEET BACKLASH

Fadnavis stays RTI rules after Hazare's threat

MUMBAI, 2 JULY

Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis ordered an immediate stay on Maharashtra Right to Information (RTI) rules following a backlash from transparency advocates and a hunger strike threat by anti-corruption activist Anna Hazare.

The Maharashtra Right to Information Rules, 2026, proposed several changes, including a higher RTI application fee, mandatory ID proof and a restriction that each application should deal with only one subject. Fadnavis on Thursday asked the Chief Commissioner of RTI to stay the new notified rules.

Hazare had urged the government to withdraw the notified Maharashtra Right to Information Rules, 2026, alleging that they dilute the spirit of the RTI Act.

He had threatened to launch an indefinite hunger strike from 5 July if the amendments were not withdrawn.

In a memorandum addressed to Fadnavis, Hazare claimed the new rules introduce procedural hurdles, higher costs and complications in the appeal process, thereby weakening transparency.

He demanded that the government revoke them and prepare fresh rules after consulting experts.

According to a notification published in the gazette on 12 June, the new rules came into force immediately.

Under the revised rules, applicants seeking information under the Right to Information Act, 2005, will have to pay an application fee of Rs 30.

Charges for information have been fixed at Rs 5 per A4 page, Rs 5 per scanned or digital page, while inspection of records will be free for the first hour and will cost Rs 50 per hour thereafter. BPL persons will be exempt from the application fee, though charges will apply for information over 50 pages. —*PTI*

WhatsApp issues FAQs on username

Feature allows users to create unique usernames without revealing phone numbers

NEW DELHI, 2 JULY

WhatsApp has released a set of FAQs on the username feature, outlining details on how it plans to address concerns around impersonation, scams and unwanted contact as users begin reserving usernames.

The FAQs come amid the Centre's notice to Meta flagging concerns over potential fraud and impersonation risks, and warning against a roll out of the feature till consultations on the issue are completed "to the satisfaction of the government."

The new feature will allow users to create unique usernames that can be used for connecting on WhatsApp without sharing phone numbers.

The FAQs say usernames will be optional, cannot be searched by strangers, and that users can add an additional 'username key' requiring both the username and the key before someone can contact them.

WhatsApp said well-known names, including those of public figures, celebrities, government entities and Meta-verified accounts, have been reserved so they can only be claimed by legitimate owners. It also said users linking their Instagram or Facebook accounts can claim matching usernames to help verify ownership, while retaining the option to unlink those accounts later.

Whatsapp said it will monitor 'blocks' and 'reports' to act against scammers, while cautioning that claims about reserving popular or well-known usernames are false. Only legitimate account owners can claim protected names, it asserts.

Here is a look at the key clarifications and safeguards outlined by WhatsApp in its FAQs:

Q: ARE USERNAMES MANDATORY?
A: Nope, they are optional.

Q: WHAT IF THE USERNAME I WANT ISN'T AVAILABLE?
A: There's a few reasons you might not be able to reserve the username you want:

1) It's an existing Instagram or Facebook username; these are reserved for their owners.

2) We've held well-known names and some variations of them, like public figures, celebrities, government entities and Meta-verified accounts, so that they can be claimed only by their legitimate owners. If you try to reserve those, the system will say it's not available.

3) Someone already claimed a common name, in that case use the username generator.

Q: WHAT IF SOMEONE CREATES A USERNAME SIMILAR TO MINE TO IMPERSONATE ME? HOW DO YOU STOP SOMEONE FROM PRETENDING TO BE ME?
A: Usernames are not available for messaging yet. When they are, and you get a message from someone new, we'll let you know the country origin, and a warning for first time outreach. We're also keeping a close eye on blocks and reports to take action against scammers.

Q: CAN RANDOM PEOPLE MESSAGE ME IF THEY KNOW OR GUESS MY USERNAME?
A: Just like you can't search for a phone number in WhatsApp, you can't search for a username. The best way to prevent someone from contacting you is to add a username key and to choose a username that is unique to WhatsApp.

All current measures remain in place to prevent unwanted contact, including warnings with details about unknown senders (whether they're a new account, if you share groups, what country they're in) and the ability to block and report.

Q: WHAT IS A USERNAME KEY?
A: An extra layer of protection you can enable with your username, so that another user will have to know both your username and your username key to contact you. You can reset your key at any time to stop new inbound contact through your username.

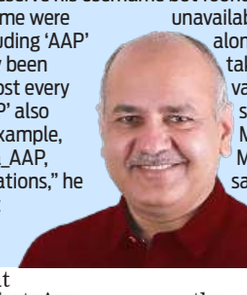
Q: DO I HAVE TO LINK MY OTHER META ACCOUNTS?
A: If you want the same username as your Instagram or Facebook account, you'll have to link them. This is one of the ways to reduce impersonation chances and make sure you're the owner of the account. But after that, you can unlink the account if you want, or you can choose a username unique to WhatsApp.

Q: CAN I CHANGE MY USERNAME LATER?
A: Yes, as long as the new one you want is available for use and has not been taken.

A few more things to keep in mind...people are making false claims about reserving popular or well-known usernames - this isn't true, only the legitimate account owners are able to reserve names of public figures. —*PTI*

AAP leader Sisodia flags impersonation concern

AAP leader Manish Sisodia raised concerns over potential impersonation following WhatsApp's rollout of username features, stating that multiple variations of his name combined with 'AAP' appeared to have already been reserved. In a post on X on Wednesday, Sisodia said he attempted to reserve his username but found that several combinations linked to his name were unavailable. He said that most variations, including 'AAP' alongside his name, appeared to have already been taken. "But what surprised me is that almost every variation using my name along with 'AAP' also seems to have been reserved--for example, Manish.Sisodia.AAP, Manish_Sisodia_AAP, ManishSisodiaAAP, and similar combinations," he said. He said the issue raises concerns about possibility of impersonation.



— PTI

9 more cerebral malaria cases in J'khand, total 150

RANCHI, 2 JULY

Nine additional people tested positive for cerebral malaria in Potka block, East Singhbhum district, Jharkhand, raising the total cases to 150 in a week, officials said. The increasing cases prompted the government to instruct districts to develop action plans to control the disease. "Since 24 June, 3,000 samples have been tested; around 150 people, including nine on Wednesday, have cerebral malaria," said Dr Mrityunjay Dhavaria, district health officer. Cases are mainly from villages like Kandar and Hithbasa, with medical teams monitoring, providing medicines, mosquito nets, and precautions. Four children have died since the first case last week. A letter from Additional Chief Secretary (Health) Ajoy Kumar Singh urged intensified surveillance and vector control—*PTI*

8,000 bottles of codeine cough syrup seized in UP

BAHRAICH, 2 JULY

Around 8,000 bottles of regulated codeine-based cough syrup were seized from an illegal warehouse here, and a drug trader was arrested under the NDPS Act, officials said on Thursday. District Drug Inspector Vinay Krishn said the recovery was made during a raid conducted on Wednesday by the Drug Department and police teams from the Dargah Sharif and Rupaideha police areas. Acting on a tip-off, the team raided an illegal warehouse in Parsaura village, where the cough syrup bottles were found stored in cartons, he said. The suspect, Ajay Kumar Yadav, was booked under Section 8/21 of the NDPS Act, arrested and jailed, the officer said. Yadav held a licence to sell medicines at a different address, but had no valid licence for the warehouse where the regulated codeine-based cough syrup was allegedly being stored. —*PTI*

Police seek nod to polygraph Siya, Chetan Chaudhary

PUNE, 2 JULY

The police has moved court seeking permission to conduct polygraph tests on Siya and her lover Chetan Chaudhary. A polygraph test, also called a 'lie detector test', measures physiological responses like blood pressure, pulse, respiration and sweat when questions are answered. Meanwhile, on Thursday police took Siya Goyal to a location in Pune where she and her lover Chetan had rehearsed how to push her fiancé realtor Ketan Agarwal off a cliff at Lohagad Fort, officials said. Clothes worn by Siya Goyal on 18 June, the day of the incident, have been recovered from her residence. Siya, 20, and Chetan, 22, are accused of pushing Ketan to death at the Lohagad Fort on 18 June. —*PTI*

LG Sinha flags off Amarnath pilgrims from Jammu

JAMMU, 2 JULY

Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha flagged off the first batch of Amarnath Yatra pilgrims from Jammu's Bhagwati Nagar base camp, amid tight security. Over 5,000 pilgrims left in escorted convoys for Pahalgam and Baltal routes, under multi-tier arrangements. Sinha performed a puja and wished the pilgrims a safe journey. "The sacred journey begins! Faith and devotion to Lord Shiva are reflected in every step," he posted. Pilgrims praised the arrangements, with some noting improved facilities for elderly and disabled. Traffic restrictions are in place along the highway until 28 August. More than 3.90 lakh registrations have been received, with on-the-spot registration available. The pilgrimage is considered one of India's most significant spiritual events. —*PTI*

Rescue operation underway after a man died after falling into an open manhole amid heavy rain in Mumbai on Thursday–*PTI*

Mumbai man falls into manhole, dies; 4 suspended

MUMBAI, 2 JULY

A 55-year-old man died after falling into an open manhole in Mumbai amid heavy rains on Thursday, prompting the BMC to suspend four officials and set up a high-level probe committee, officials said.

The incident occurred in the Chandivali area. Mayor Ritu Tawde, who visited the spot, announced an ex gratia of Rs 10 lakh for the family of the deceased, the BMC said in a release, adding that the contractor has been blacklisted.

BMC officials said three contract workers had removed the manhole cover to install a protective grill on a manhole on a sewer line along Khariani Road when the man, who was allegedly talking on his phone, accidentally fell into the opening.

Fire brigade and disaster management teams conducted a search and the man's body was recovered later, he said.

Footage from a CCTV camera installed in the area showed the man, later identified as Aslam Ishaq Shaikh, walking past a tempo and suddenly disappearing. It also showed workers at the spot peering into the open manhole located in the Kurla-Sakinaka area.

Officials said the workers lowered a ladder into the manhole to search for him, but found only his umbrella and slippers. Due to the strong flow, it was initially not possible to determine the direction in which he had been swept away, officials said.

The man was later located some distance from where he had fallen. "A fireman equipped with breathing apparatus descended into the underground line and the man was pulled out," an official said. He was rushed to the Rajavadi Hospital, where doctors declared him dead, the BMC official said. —*PTI*

MEGHALAYA GOVT OPPOSES BAIL FOR HONEYMOON 'KILLER'

NEW DELHI, 2 JULY

The Meghalaya government has moved the SC against granting bail to Sonam Raghuvanshi, who is accused of murdering her husband during their honeymoon here in 2025. Justices MM Sundresh and Sheel Nagu was told by Solicitor General Tushar Mehta on Thursday that the HC has erred in granting bail to the prime accused and sought urgent listing of the plea. Mehta submitted that bail was granted as the grounds of arrest were not fully supplied to her at the time of arrest.

"The non-supply of documents relates only to a provision that was wrongly cited due to a typographical error," he said, while emphasising that there was a chance of the accused absconding

The bench agreed to list the matter for hearing on Friday.

On 29 June, the Meghalaya HC had upheld a court order granting bail to Sonam.

The couple had gone missing while vacationing in Meghalaya's Sohra area on 23 May 2025. Subsequently, Raja Raghuvanshi's body was found in a deep gorge on 2 June in 2025. —*PTI*

DEADLY DRIVING

A 34-year-old tourist from Rajasthan was killed and three were injured when their SUV lost control and plunged into an under-construction cement structure near Atal Tunnel in HP Manali on Tuesday night –*PTI*

'KEEP REPORTS ON THREATS TO EX-JUDGE SECRET'

MUMBAI, 2 JULY

The Bombay High Court on Thursday directed the Centre and Mumbai police to keep their reports into alleged death threats against former judge Gautam Patel confidential. The reports, submitted in relation to threats over his 2024 Dawoodi Bohra succession verdict, were deemed sensitive. The bench of Acting Chief Justice Ravindra Ghuge and Justice Gautam Ankhad stated, "It would not be ideal to publicise details of the investigation."

The court recalled the 26 November, 2008 terror attacks, emphasising the importance of confidentiality to prevent hampering investigations. The police report revealed two non-cognisable offences linked to threats against Justice Patel and his family.

The Ministry of External Affairs also submitted a report detailing protective steps taken for Justice Patel and his family in London, including regarding an assault on his daughter. —*PTI*

DEFAMATION CASE AGAINST KHAN SIR SENT FOR MEDIATION

NEW DELHI, 2 JULY

The Delhi High Court on Thursday referred the defamation case involving TV Today Network Ltd and journalist Anjana Om Kashyap against educator Faisal Khan, known as 'Khan Sir', and other teachers, to mediation. Justice Tushar Rao Gedela advised the channel and Kashyap to exercise restraint and asked Khan Sir to remove his social media post about Kashyap's children. The court called for an amicable resolution, requesting the defendants to consider removing "unparliamentary" language from their posts. The lawsuit also names Abhinay Sharma, Babita Tyagi, and Arvind Bhadauriya as defendants. The plaintiffs' counsel highlighted that Khan Sir disclosed info about Kashyap's children's education and claimed she was "getting threats."

The court observed that the dispute could be resolved amicably and suggested appointing a mediator. The hearing will continue next week. Kashyap and TV Today stated Kashyap expressed concerns about the credibility of YouTube teachers after the NEET paper leak. —*PTI*

30 men rape minor in R'than, 3 hotels razed

JAISALMER, 2 JULY

A 13-year-old girl was allegedly raped by around 30 men in five days in Rajasthan's Sri Ganganagar. The sexual assault took place in several hotels. The government demolished the three hotels on Wednesday where the gang rape and prostitution occurred using JCBs.

The FIR says the survivor's ordeal began after she went missing from her home and was subsequently sold to a hotel owner by a rickshaw puller.

Several other hotel operators are also accused of being involved in the sexual exploitation of the minor. An attempt was allegedly made to suppress the crime.

Many hotel owners and managers have been arrested in connection with the case.

There are around 150 illegal hotels operating in Sri Ganganagar. The incident resulted in demands to shut down such establishments.

As per the direction of Sri Ganganagar SP Harishankar Yadav and District Collector Amit Yadav, Hotel Khungar, Hotel Joy Inn, and Hotel Sapphire were demolished.

The district administration is also in the process of sealing other hotels allegedly involved in the case. By Wednesday morning, 14 suspects had been arrested in the case

SP Harishankar said on 22 June, a woman appeared at RICO Police Post and said that on 18 June, she had gone to work and that when she returned home, her daughter was missing.

The complainant also said that her daughter did not have a phone and provided her photograph. The in-charge of RICO Post immediately informed the SHO of Sadar Police Station, about the incident.

The SHO raided Hotel Joy Inn and rescued the minor. The hotel operator and two employees were also brought to the police station. —*PTI*

MISSING INTERNAL ORGANS

Dead Indian sailor's family demands probe

- The family of a 33-year-old Indian seafarer, whose body was repatriated from Venezuela after he died while serving on a ship, has sought an investigation after an autopsy found many of his internal organs missing. The Federation of Seafarers' Unions of India (FSUI) has demanded accountability from the Venezuelan authorities who did the first autopsy

DEORIA, 2 JULY

The family of a 33-year-old Indian seafarer, whose body was repatriated from Venezuela after he died while serving on a merchant vessel, has sought an investigation after an autopsy found internal organs missing.

The Federation of Seafarers' Unions of India (FSUI) has demanded accountability from the Venezuelan authorities and immediate intervention by the Indian Embassy.

Rakesh Chauhan, a resident of Langra Bazar Tola in the Deoria district, went to Venezuela in November 2025 as a crew member on a merchant ship through a private company, his family said.

His family said the company informed them in May that Chauhan was injured seriously after a fall and was undergoing treatment.

The next morning, they were told that his chances of survival were only five per cent, and later they were informed of his death.

The company attributed the death to injuries suffered in the fall and assured the family that the body would be sent to India within a week. However, the body reached Deoria only in June.

Family said doctors who examined the body informed them that an autopsy had already been conducted and a fresh autopsy could not be performed without the competent authority's approval.

A second autopsy was carried out two days ago as per the orders of the district magistrate.

Deoria Medical College Chief Medical Superintendent Dr HK Mishra said the brain, heart, both lungs, liver, kidneys, spleen, pancreas, stomach and intestines were missing. The report also noted that the thyroid, hyoid bone, larynx and trachea were also missing. —*PTI*

Gold theft: Cop suspended, ex-TDB chief denies charge

T'PURAM, 2 JULY

Kerala's institutions are facing renewed scrutiny this week over the handling of gold, with a police suspension in Malappuram and fresh allegations against a former temple board chief in Thiruvananthapuram.

Former Karipur station house officer Abbas Ali has been suspended after an inquiry found he had taken around eight sovereigns of gold ornaments, three chains, two pairs of earrings, a ring and a bracelet that had been handed in by the public to return to their owners.

Ali, who was already under suspension over a separate case in Palakkad, reportedly offered to return the ornaments after the inquiry began. A departmental probe will determine further action.

Gold controversies keep piling up in the state, as former Travancore Devaswom Board president PS Prasanth denied that his board conspired with Sabarimala gold-loss accused Unnikrishnan Potty to replate temple artefacts in 2025. The denial follows the SIT informing the Kerala High Court of evidence against Prasanth's board over the 2019 Dwarapalaka idol replating.

He said the board, which took charge only in November 2023, learnt of the replating only in 2025, and maintained that TDB officials, not Potty, carried out the 2025 work, which increased the gold's overall quantity. —*PTI*

RS 12,000 CR EXPRESSWAY CRUMBLES

Just three months after its inauguration, huge potholes have appeared on the Rs 12,000 crore Delhi-Dehradun Expressway after heavy rains. Prime Minister Narendra Modi inaugurated it on 14 April. It was made to cut travel time from six hours to just 2.5 hours. A viral video showed many potholes and the person also claimed to have seen many accidents caused by them. —SCREENGRAB

Migration, twin addresses complicate Delhi SIR

Although many migrants have spent generations in Delhi, their electoral records often remain linked to their native villages as they have property there —ANI

Decades of migration, split households and duplicate addresses are complicating Delhi's voter roll revision in unauthorised colonies and slums, forcing Booth Level Officers to navigate through changing neighbourhoods as they verify electoral records.

A house number is expected to identify one property. In east Delhi's Rani Garden, a pocket in Geeta Colony, it can be shared by two or even three.

In the unauthorised colony, where narrow lanes have grown over decades, families have expanded, plots have been divided, new structures have come up around old jhuggis, and residents have shifted to nearby rented houses without moving far.

"There are houses where two or three properties carry the same number because owners built another house later. When we go for verification, they tell us both belong to the same family. Naturally, it creates confusion," said Bankey Lal, a Booth Level Officer (BLO) who has been handling the area since 2016.

Rani Garden's original cluster consists of around 325 jhuggis laid out in serial order from A-1 to A-325. Over the years, however, families grew, new constructions appeared, houses were sold, rebuilt, or partitioned, while numbers often remained unchanged.

"The serial numbers made sense earlier. But later people bought houses elsewhere, shifted on rent or built additional portions. That's why the numbering no longer reflects the way the colony has grown," said Noor Mohammed, a Delhi Congress worker who was born and brought up in the area.

Noor explained that most families trace their roots to parts of Uttar Pradesh, particularly Bijnor and Farrukhabad, while many others migrated from Bihar and Jharkhand in search of work decades ago. Although they have spent generations in Delhi, their electoral records often remain linked to their native villages.

For Lal, identifying such cases has become an important part of the ongoing Special Intensive Revision (SIR).

"We explain that a voter should be registered only at one place. If someone has already kept their name in their village, they shouldn't keep another registration in Delhi. Initially, many ask why it is necessary or argue with us, but we explain the rules," he said.

The BLO said he supervised 853 electors and around 330 names were deleted over the last six months after following the prescribed process. By 2pm on the first day of the SIR exercise on Tuesday, he had distributed only about 40 enumeration forms.

Residents who have shifted often remain on electoral rolls for years, Lal said.

"For three or four years, we have kept taking voter slips, but nobody has been found at the address. Even then, we leave the slips because they may return. Only after repeated visits do we tell them to update their address through Form 8. If they don't, the deletion follows the Election Commission's procedure," he explained.

He added that outdated voter identity card photographs are another recurring issue. "Many people are still carrying childhood photographs. We ask them to update those as well," he added.

Originally from Uttar Pradesh, Samiuddin moved to Rani Garden in 1990. What began as a six-member household has grown into an extended family of nearly 20.

"When we first came here, all of us lived under one roof. Then my brothers got married, children were born, and the family kept growing. There wasn't enough space anymore, so two of my brothers moved with their families to a rented house just across the lane. We are still one family, just living in two houses now," he said.

Such stories are common, where expanding families have gradually spread into neighbouring houses without leaving the locality.

As a result, the BLO said many families have electoral ties to two places.

Tahir, a businessman originally from Uttar Pradesh's Bijnor who has lived in Delhi since 1992, said he continues to remain registered as a voter in his native district because his family's ancestral property is there, while his children are getting themselves enrolled in Delhi.

The ongoing revision has also caused some anxiety among some residents, particularly those with incomplete documentation.

Noor, who also runs a local NGO and often helps residents with civic issues, said people living in jhuggis or families whose documents were destroyed in house fires are among those worried about the verification exercise.

"Some families are worried because their documents were lost or destroyed, including in house fires. We tell them not to panic. We explain what documents can be obtained again, help them with the process and guide them to the BLO whenever required," he said. More than 13,000 BLOs began the Special Intensive Revision across Delhi on Tuesday, distributing enumeration forms across the capital's 70 Assembly constituencies. —PTI

SALAR ساہر

Can't wait for more tragedies: Students on hunger strike

For six student activists sitting on an indefinite hunger strike at Delhi's Jantar Mantar, the protest is not only about Union Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan's resignation, but also about what they describe as a deeper crisis in India's education system.

Sitting on a separate stage, the six students - Neha, Danish, Manish, Deepak Kumar Verma, Hrishikesh, and Aameen, associated with the All-India Students' Association (AISA), entered the fourth day of their indefinite fast on Wednesday.

AISA stated that the blood sugar level of Jawaharlal Nehru University Students' Union (JNUSU) Joint Secretary Danish had dropped to 61 mg/dL, while doctors advised Aameen and Deepak Kumar Verma to stop; they continued nevertheless.

Neha, the AISA All India President, who pursues a PhD in the School of Arts and Aesthetics at JNU, joined believing that students had long been fighting these issues.

"Sonam Wangchuk sir was on a hunger strike with two issues: Ladakh and Dharmendra Pradhan's resignation. But our struggle for Pradhan's resignation has not started today. We have been raising these issues since 2021, when he became education minister and the series of paper leaks began," she said.

Neha said that university exposed her to inequalities she had not encountered before. She added that it made them realise that the things they thought were small was part of a larger system.

Hrishikesh, a PhD scholar in Physics at JNU and president of Barak Hostel, said his experience helped him understand exam aspirants' pressure.

Coming from Assam's Bajali district, he studied at Delhi University before pursuing higher education at JNU.

"Students prepare for years. If something goes wrong in an exam, their entire future is affected," he said, adding that paper leaks, technical problems and irregularities create immense mental pressure among students.

He also noted that there was no mess in JNU hostel because there was no fund.

Aameen, a PhD scholar in Urban Studies at Ambedkar University Delhi, linked the crisis to unemployment anxiety among young people. A former council member at AUD and DU's Khalsa College, he said systemic problems cut across class lines.

"Even if you have relative privilege, you cannot escape the systemic problems," he said. He called student suicides a symptom of institutional failure, not isolated tragedy.

Manish, a PhD scholar at Allahabad University and AISA Uttar Pradesh President, said he decided to continue the hunger strike because he believed students could not wait for more tragedies.

"Dozens of students have lost their lives, and the system has pushed them towards that situation. We cannot allow more students to suffer," he said.

Manish, from Azamgarh, cited personal costs of his activism, including PhD suspensions he contested legally.

"My family was also worried. They did not want me to sit without eating or drinking. My mother, grandmother and partner were all concerned. But if I don't do this, then what will I do?" he said.

He added that despite the pressure, he continued because he believed students needed to speak up. "If we don't speak today, then in the future, more such incidents will continue," he said.

The youngest among the six, Deepak Kumar Verma, 21, AISA Delhi University Vice President, is pursuing a graduation in Economics from Delhi University. He said his concerns went beyond exam issues to broader education policy.

"Universities are being privatised, and education is becoming inaccessible," he said.

He said his parents don't use Instagram, so they did not know about him being on a hunger strike, adding that he planned to tell them after a while.

Despite the fast, meeting people at the protest site strengthened his resolve.

Danish, a JNU student and JNUSU Joint Secretary, said the protest was about accountability in a democracy. She added that in a democratic country, people with power should be responsible and accountable

She said repeated examination failures had affected students across the country. "It is not only about paper leaks. Public education itself is being weakened. Funds are being cut, fees are increasing, and education is being made inaccessible," she said.

Danish tied the demand for the minister's resignation to accountability.

The six students said the strike continues past student movements and will go on until their concerns are met. —PTI

The six students - Neha, Danish, Manish, Deepak Kumar Verma, Hrishikesh, and Aameen, associated with the All-India Students' Association (AISA), entered the fourth day of their fast on Wednesday —SCREENGRAB

LETTERS

write to us at salarenglishdigital@gmail.com

WhatsApp's new usernames feature stirs fears of impersonation

WhatsApp's proposed username feature has raised concerns among experts and users, who believe the new offering could trigger a surge in impersonation, spoofing, and financial fraud.

Analysts caution that moving to platform-managed identities removes a crucial layer of accountability. Some users, like MobiKwik CEO Bipin Preet Singh, found that close variations of their names were already taken up during the early username reservation phase.

The concerns come in the wake of WhatsApp's announcement of the introduction of usernames on the messaging platform, a feature that will allow people to communicate without sharing their phone numbers.

The company has opened early reservations for usernames, which will be officially rolled out later this year.

WhatsApp said the move is aimed at enhancing user privacy, particularly in group chats or when connecting with new acquaintances, by eliminating the need to exchange phone numbers.

The government is examining the legal framework and provisions in the law as it scrutinises WhatsApp's proposed username feature over fraud and impersonation concerns, according to sources.

The government is likely to send a notice to WhatsApp seeking full details about the features and question its implications and the company's plans. Law enforcement agencies may also examine the issue, an official said.

WhatsApp's latest move has also triggered widespread concerns.

Faisal Kawoosa, Chief Analyst and Founder at Techarc, noted that while phone numbers offer a layer of verification, usernames can be misleading.

"While celebrity names have been reserved, it's still easy to impersonate, and we have seen how verified accounts have worked on X. Fraudsters can easily use some variations which commoners won't be able to catch easily," Kawoosa said, adding that public trust in WhatsApp as a safe platform for communication is likely to decline. Calling the feature "both a boon and a bane", Abhilash Kumar, Lead Research Advisor at Smart Analytics Global, said it will reduce the chances of ending up on spam lists.

"Users will no longer need to share their primary contact number for every business discussion or negotiation, helping protect their privacy and reducing the chances of ending up on cold-calling or spam lists." However, he warned that it could dilute identity authenticity.

WhatsApp username
Choose a username
People who don't have your number will be able to find and contact you using your username.
Username
@yourname
Usernames can only contain lower case letters (a-z), numbers (0-9), and periods (.).

The concerns come in the wake of WhatsApp's announcement of the introduction of usernames on the messaging platform, a feature that will allow people to communicate without sharing their phone numbers —SCREENGRAB

"WhatsApp should internally map usernames to the underlying phone number and introduce robust identity verification mechanisms," he suggested.

Nikhil Narendran, Partner (TMT) at Trilegal, noted that while reserving handles may protect celebrities, the larger challenge is protecting ordinary users and small businesses.

"Trust is shifting from a visible telecom identifier to a platform-managed identity. Banks and businesses will need to rely more on verified business accounts, in-app verification, digital signatures and customer education, rather than assuming that a phone number is sufficient proof of identity," Narendran said.

Users may assume a familiar-looking username is genuine without noticing subtle variations, substantially increasing the chances of spoofing.

Prachir Singh, Senior Analyst at Counterpoint Research, pointed out that the feature reduces a simple layer of accountability, as users can no longer verify someone's identity by simply calling their number.

"Although WhatsApp has introduced safeguards such as the optional username key and reserved usernames for public figures, lookalike usernames and impersonation will remain challenges. Going forward, stronger impersonation detection and more visible verified accounts will be essential, especially for banks, businesses, and government agencies," Singh added.

Paytm founder and CEO Vijay Shekhar Sharma has warned that lookalike usernames could become a major vector for impersonation and scams if not properly protected.

Prominent Indian startup founders and public figures also took to social media platform X to express concerns regarding the potential for abuse of the feature.

Author and entrepreneur Ankur Warikoo warned that the feature could be a "disaster" in India if the right anti-abuse systems are not established.

Highlighting how scammers could use subtle variations of a username to solicit money, Warikoo said, "Most people don't understand verified status... So, forgive me, if from a public figure's standpoint, this feature raises some serious concerns".

Rajeev Mantri, founder and Managing Partner of Navam Capital, called it a "colossal data harvesting and data pooling scheme". —PTI

Progress in Iran-US talks, says Pak, Qatar

Iran says it decides how to spend its frozen assets; US & 12 Arab nations meet on Hormuz

DOHA, 2 JULY

Pakistan on Thursday said its mediators, along with Qatar, concluded separate meetings with the US and Iranian negotiators in Doha and reported "positive progress" on various aspects of the MoU, with the two sides agreeing to further discussions. No dates were announced, but discussions will continue after the funeral of former Iranian supreme leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, scheduled on 5, 6, and 7 of July in Tehran and Qom, with the final ceremony on 9 July in Mashhad.

The US and Iran signed the MoU on 18 June, aimed at restoring peace in West Asia. It was followed by technical-level talks in Switzerland on 21 June.

The Foreign Office said that "positive progress made on issues related to the aspects of the Islamabad MOU".

Iran's Deputy Foreign Minister for Legal and International Affairs, Kazem Gharibabadi, said Tehran raised concerns over Washington's implementation of previous commitments during the Doha discussions, according to state media. "We raised the issue of the US' failure to fulfil commitments in Lebanon".

He added that discussions with Qatari officials also focused on the use of part of the initial frozen USD 6 billion in Iranian funds.

A school in Tehan held a memorial service for Zahra Haddad Adel, the wife of Supreme Leader Mojtaba Khamenei, on Thursday. She was killed on 28 February by the same US-Israel strikes that killed her father-in-law and former supreme leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei —*IRNA*

US chopper crashes in Arabian Sea

The US Navy is searching for a missing crew member after an MH-60S Sea Hawk helicopter assigned to the USS George HW Bush (CVN 77) made an emergency water landing in the Arabian Sea, the US Naval Forces Central Command, also called the US 5th Fleet, said. The chopper crashed on 1 July, and the Navy said there was "no indication" that foul play was involved. Three of the four crew members were rescued, while one is still missing. —*ANI*

"It was agreed that the purchase of required goods will be carried out and placed at Iran's disposal," he said.the US has been claiming that Iran would use the assets to buy agricultural produce from America.

Meanwhile, US Central Command (CENTCOM) spearheaded a security dialogue hosted by the Bahrain Defense Force, bringing together top military officials from 12 nations. Representatives from Bahrain, Egypt, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Syria, the United Arab Emirates, and Yemen attended.

"Leaders underscored their shared commitment to the free flow of commerce through the Strait of Hormuz," CENTCOM stated. US President Donald Trump has been pushing Syria to take action against Hezbollah in Lebanon.

Iran did not take the meeting well. "Hormuz is defined under Iran's command, not CENTCOM," Gharibabadi posted on X. He said a military summit can't formulate a "legal order and security for the Persian Gulf". —*Agencies*

ISRAEL KILLED 21,000 CHILDREN IN 1,000 DAYS OF GAZA GENOCIDE

In just 1,000 days after launching a genocidal war, Israel has killed 73,066 Palestinians in Ga-za, 21,500 of whom were children, including 1,022 babies, the health ministry stated. The two million Palestinians face a bleak future, with around 90 per cent of the Gaza Strip destroyed, and the Israel military looking to extend its control to 70 per cent of the enclave. The ceasefire last October has brought little peace, with at least 1,053 people killed since. The Board of Peace, which US President Donald Trump created and appears to have made himself the permanent head of, has made little progress in furthering the ceasefire or reconstructing the Strip, where the Palestinians still face acute food shortages and sleep in tents filled with rats and near garbage and sewage pits.

Palestinians walk along a road surrounded by buildings destroyed in Israeli military strikes during the Israel-Hamas war, in Jabalia, Gaza Strip —*PTI*

WB upgrades SL to upper-middle income economy

COLOMBO, 2 JULY

The World Bank has reclassified Sri Lanka as an upper-middle-income economy, three years after the country faced its worst economic crisis. The economy expanded by 5 per cent in 2025, supported by recovery across industries, tourism, and financial services. The World Bank described Sri Lanka as "a story of recovery" and noted that, "just three years after a severe crisis in 2022, real GDP grew by 5 per cent, driven by rebounding sectors." The reclassification indicates resilience, though the country narrowly crossed the income threshold. Sri Lanka first entered this category in 2019 but slipped back due to slowed growth and pressures. —*PTI*

Massive flooding in Ivory Coast kills 59

ABIDJAN, 2 JULY

Flooding and landslides in Ivory Coast have resulted in at least 59 deaths, with authorities fearing the toll will rise. Torrential rains, starting Saturday, caused significant destruction in Attecoube and Yopougon, the capital's municipalities. In Ghana, heavy rains killed 12 people, as floods submerged buildings and roads in Accra and Tema, cutting off access. Among the victims in Ghana were a mother and child swept away in Achimota-Agbogbloshie. Residents swam through neck-deep water to rescue neighbours, with emergency services requesting military aid. —*PTI*

Beijing plane crash pilot had anxiety, says investigators

BEIJING, 2 JULY

The pilot of the small plane that crashed into Beijing's tallest skyscraper last week suffered from anxiety and had discussed "ending his life" in diaries, investigators revealed. The two-seat plane hit the CITIC Tower on 26 June, causing evacuations. Pilot Liu, 66, was a divorcee living alone, with licences obtained in 2021 and 2024. He took off from Pinggu, Beijing, and during a solo flight, left the designated area, losing contact before crashing. Liu had long-term insomnia, anxiety, and diary references to ending his life. The incident raised security concerns, given the building's proximity to key government sites, and was caused by "personal reasons." Chinese authorities quickly removed related posts from social media. —*PTI*

—*INSTAGRAM*

Taylor Swift, Kelce to get hitched today: Sources

NEW YORK, 2 JULY

Taylor Swift and Travis Kelce are set to celebrate their wedding at Madison Square Garden on Friday night, according to a security official. The event will begin with a rehearsal dinner on Thursday. Speculation about the wedding has grown, following unconfirmed reports it would take place over the July Fourth weekend at an iconic New York venue. Crews have been seen unloading equipment outside the arena, with a large carpet briefly displayed. Neither Swift nor Kelce has publicly confirmed the wedding, despite requests for comment. The event remains under tight security, with preparations continuing at the historic Madison Square Garden ahead of the celebration. —*PTI*

Massive Russian drone attack kills 20 in Kyiv

The Russian attack was one of the largest since it began its invasion four years ago, bringing down several high-rise buildings in Ukraine's capital Kyiv —*UKRAINE EMERGENCY SERVICES*

KYIV, 2 JULY

Ukraine's capital Kyiv faced a "night of horror" overnight into Thursday as Russia launched one of its largest drone and missile barrages, killing at least 20 civilians and injuring at least 90 others, said Ukrainian Foreign Minister Andrii Sybiha.

Russia's Defence Ministry said in a statement that the deadly bombardment was in response to Ukraine's long-range strikes on its infrastructure – including oil refineries. Ukraine has recently been striking deeper into Russia of late, triggering an unprecedented fuel crisis, that President Volodymyr Zelenskyy has described as "long range sanctions".

Russia's attack used "high-precision long-range weapons" and drones on "military industry facilities and fuel and energy complexes in Kyiv and the Kyiv region, as well as military airfield infrastructure in four other regions of Ukraine," its Defence Ministry's statement said. Russia fired 74 missiles, 24 of them ballistic, and 496 drones of various types in the attack, Ukraine's Air Force said.

Loud explosions rattled Kyiv for hours, with many sheltering in metro stations. Damage was recorded in 30 locations across the city, mainly residential buildings and civilian infrastructure. Some 20 residential buildings were damaged.

In Kyiv's Darnytskyi district, six levels of a nine-story building collapsed, Mayor Vitali Klitschko said, while in the Holosiivskyi district, 500 rescue personnel were deployed after a massive fire on the roof of a 16-story building. People were trapped inside a damaged nine-story residential building in Desnianskyi district, with the toll expected to rise. —*PTI*

China trying to take Panama Canal: Trump

NORTH DAKOTA, 2 JULY

US President Donald Trump on Wednesday claimed that China was looking to take over the Panama Canal.

Speaking at the opening of the Theodore Roosevelt Presidential Library in Medora, Trump criticised the decision to transfer control of the canal, claiming that the Panama was hiking transit fees in the key waterway.

"The Panama Canal, so we gave it away. The first thing they did, you know what they did? They raised the prices for the ships by four times, and they didn't lose one ship. And then

they raised it again twice, and they didn't lose one ship. All they did was make tremendous amounts of money for years and years. How stupid was that?" Trump said. "And now China's trying to take over the Panama Canal. We're not going to let that happen. That was not part of the script because I don't really have a script because this doesn't work." —*ANI*

US President Donald Trump spoke to an AI recreation of former president Theodore Roosevelt, who backed Panama's secession from Colombia and then helped build the Panama Canal. Trump asked the AI if the Canal was his greatest achievement —*SCREENGRAB/PTI*

UN asks Pakistan to reverse 'reconstructions' at Taxila sites

ISLAMABAD, 2 JULY

The UN has asked Pakistan to reverse "reconstructions" that undermined the integrity of Mohra Moradu and Sirkap in Taxila, warning the sites could be added to UNESCO's danger list otherwise.

UNESCO, in a recent meeting, told senior officials that it would not hesitate to "delist" the historical sites due to the recent "unnecessary interventions" if the actions were not reversed.

In March, a visitor shared photos with Pakistan's Permanent Delegate to UNESCO in Paris showing fresh, polished masonry replacing irregular ancient walls, with reconstruction apparently raising wall heights. UNESCO has since sought documentation on the conservation work.

Punjab Archaeology Department Director General Malik Zaheer Abbas rejected the charge, calling the work conservation measures. —*PTI*

11-YR-OLD CRASHES TRUCK INTO GROUP OF THAI MONKS, 8 DEAD

BANGKOK, 2 JULY

Eight Buddhist monks were killed after an 11-year-old boy crashed a pickup truck into a group of pilgrims in northeastern Thailand on Thursday, officials said.

Thirty-five monks from Mukdahan province were undertaking a 260-km pilgrimage to Ubon Ratchathani when the accident occurred.

Five monks died at the scene and three later succumbed in hospital.

Fourteen others were injured, including four in critical condition.

Security camera footage showed the monks walking in single file before the crash. Police said witnesses saw the vehicle swerving before it veered off the road.

The boy is in custody, and the accident is under investigation. —*PTI*

Mexico sends spl squad as Venezuelans lose hope

MEXICO CITY, 2 JULY

The Brigada Internacional de Rescate Topos Azteca, one of Mexico's best-known civilian search-and-rescue organisations, is heading to Venezuela nearly after a week after two powerful earthquakes devastated the country's Caribbean coast. Authorities on Wednesday said more than 2,200 people have died and over 11,000 have been injured.

Founded after the devastating 1985 Mexico City earthquake, the nonprofit brigade operates independently and has earned an international reputation for deploying to major disasters at home and abroad.

A puppy, burried under rubble for nearly a week in La Guaira state, was rescued —*SCREENGRAB*

Once they assess the stability of collapsed structures, rescuers split into small teams assigned to different sections of the debris. They crawl through narrow openings and voids inside pancaked buildings — a practice that earned them the nickname "Topos," or moles.

Armed with shovels, hand hammers and other tools, they slowly remove rubble, inch by inch, trying to avoid triggering further collapses.

International rescue teams continue searching collapsed apartment buildings and homes in the hardest-hit state of La Guaira, even as hopes of finding more survivors fade and the mission increasingly shifts toward recovery. —*PTI*

'ALMOST FERAL'

16 kids kept in 1 room for 4 years in Ohio

HAMDEN, 2 JULY

Sixteen children from the same family who were rescued from a dilapidated home in rural Ohio were living in wretched conditions with human waste all around, confined to just one room over much of the past four years, authorities said Wednesday. They were "almost feral".

Some of the children discovered on Tuesday were unable to speak and one — an 18-year-old who was developmentally disabled — could not even write her name, investigators said.

"Most of our livestock was kept in better conditions than the children," said Vinton County Sheriff Ryan Cain. "A disgusting scene".

The children's parents Gary Siders Jr and Christina Siders, along with grandparents Gary Siders Sr and Elizabeth Siders, were charged with felony child endangerment. All pleaded not guilty through the court, and bond was set at USD 300,000 each.

The children's grandparents Gary Siders Sr and Elizabeth Siders and parents Gary Siders Jr and Christina Siders have been charged – *x*

Authorities found the children while carrying out a search warrant in an unrelated investigation, Ohio Attorney General Andy Wilson said Wednesday at a news conference.

Officials and neighbours said it seemed as if no one outside the family knew about the children.

"We didn't know there were going to be 16 kids there," said Wilson. "It's the type of thing that we're not used to seeing here in America."

Hamden is a tiny village in one of Ohio's poorest counties.

The children ranged in age from 1 1/2 years to 18 years old and included both boys and girls, officials said. Seven were transported to hospitals in Columbus and two were flown by helicopters. One was in critical condition on Tuesday while some of the others were admitted for care. —*PTI*

UK APOLOGISES FOR DECADES OF FORCED ADOPTIONS

LONDON, 2 JULY

UK Prime Minister Keir Starmer on Thursday formally apologised for the British state's role in forcing thousands of unmarried mothers to give up their babies for adoption between 1949 and 1976, describing it as a "stain on our history."

Addressing Parliament, Starmer said women were "coerced, bullied or misled" into believing they had no choice but to give up their babies.

"To every one of those affected we say a deep and heartfelt sorry," he said.

An estimated 1,85,000 babies were adopted in England and Wales during the period. Campaigners have long sought official recognition that women were pressured into surrendering their children. Former health minister Ann Keen, whose baby was adopted in 1966, welcomed the apology, saying, "We didn't give them up."

The apology follows similar acknowledgements by Scotland, Wales and, two weeks ago, the Church of England. Other countries, including Australia and Ireland, have also apologised for historic forced adoption practices. Ireland's 2021 inquiry found about 9,000 children died in church-run mother-and-baby homes during the 20th century.

The cause of the accident remains under investigation, but police noted monks saw the vehicle swerving before it slid off the road and collided with them. —*PTI*

— PTI

Adar Poonawalla invests Rs 700 cr in Inox clean

NEW DELHI, 2 JULY

Inox Clean Energy Limited announced on Thursday that it has secured Rs 700 crore from Rising Sun Holdings Pvt Ltd, part of the Adar Poonawalla Family Office. The funding was raised at a valuation of Rs 70,000 crore, reinforcing investor confidence in the company's growth strategy. Devansh Jain, Executive Director of INOXGFL Group, said, "We welcome Adar Poonawalla Family Office as an investor in Inox Clean. This investment is a strong endorsement of our vision, execution capabilities, and long-term growth strategy." The investment follows previous funding from CalPERS, which invested around Rs 800 crore. Inox Clean operates across renewable energy and solar manufacturing, with plans for 15GW of installed capacity and 11GW of solar manufacturing by FY28.—*PTI*

Flipkart names Vinay Vaidya as senior VP

NEW DELHI, 2 JULY

Flipkart announced the appointment of Vinay Vaidya as Senior Vice President of Technology for supply chain on Thursday. Vaidya will oversee technology and platforms across fulfilment services, seller experience, trust and safety, and marketplace, focusing on logistics and AI-driven innovation. With over 20 years in digital commerce, he was most recently CTO at Tata Digital, leading digital transformations. He previously worked at Amazon for nearly 18 years, contributing to Marketplace, Payments, and Amazon India. Balaji Thiagarajan, Flipkart's Chief Product and Technology Officer, stated that Vinay's experience at complex commerce environments will help strengthen the company's technology foundations. Vaidya believes technology can make commerce simpler, faster, and more inclusive. —*PTI*

Govt to sell LIC, PSU stake to cushion oil crisis hit

LIC expected to raise Rs 10,000 cr; 7 other PSUs to be sold

NEW DELHI, 2 JULY

The Centre is planning to sell stakes in some of India's largest public sector companies, including Life Insurance Corporation of India (LIC), Hindustan Zinc and several state-owned banks, to cushion the impact of higher oil prices on government finances, Bloomberg reported.

The government has identified eight Public Sector Undertakings (PSUs) for stake sales in the coming months as it seeks to raise additional resources while keeping the fiscal deficit under control.

Among the biggest transactions is a follow-on public offer in LIC, expected to raise up to Rs 10,000 crore, while a stake sale in Hindustan Zinc could fetch around Rs 5,000 crore. The Centre currently holds 96.5 per cent in LIC and must reduce its stake to 90 per cent by May next year under SEBI regulations, before bringing it down to 25 per cent by 2030.

LIC is expected to raise up to Rs 10,000 crore, while a stake sale in Hindustan Zinc could fetch around Rs 5,000 crore —*AI*

Bloomberg also reported that the government is considering fresh bids for the sale of a majority stake in IDBI Bank after an earlier attempt failed to attract sufficient interest. The reserve price may be lowered, with bidding likely to be limited to previous participants.

The disinvestment drive comes amid mixed market conditions. Foreign investors withdrew nearly $29 billion from Indian equities during the first half of the year, while upcoming mega listings such as Jio Platforms and the National Stock Exchange could compete for investor funds. However, strong demand for recent stake sales in Coal India and NHPC has boosted confidence. India has already raised nearly $2 billion through share sales in the April–June quarter, surpassing disinvestment proceeds recorded in each of the previous three financial years and making steady progress towards its Rs 80,000 crore FY27 target.

The renewed push follows the recent spike in crude oil prices during the Iran-West Asia conflict. Although prices have eased, officials are creating fiscal headroom against future volatility. —*Agencies*

Adani, UAE's IHC to invest $11.5B in Odisha for aluminium project

BHUBANESWAR, 2 JULY

Adani Enterprises Ltd (AEL), the flagship company of the Adani Group, and International Resources Holding (IRH), the Abu Dhabi-based natural resources investment platform of International Holding Company (IHC) Group, have signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the Odisha government to develop an integrated greenfield aluminium project in the state.

The proposed project will involve an investment of USD 11.5 billion (around Rs 1.08 lakh crore) and is expected to generate more than 53,000 jobs during its construction and operational phases.

Speaking at the MoU signing ceremony in Bhubaneswar, Adani Enterprises Managing Director Karan Adani said the project would rank among the world's largest investments in the aluminium sector and significantly strengthen Odisha's industrial development.

"With a proposed investment of USD 11.5 billion, translating to nearly Rs 1.08 lakh crore, this is among the most significant aluminium ecosystem investments anywhere in the world. Its true significance lies not only in the size of the investment, but in the depth of its impact," he said.

The integrated project will cover the entire aluminium value chain, comprising an alumina refinery with a capacity of nearly four million tonnes per annum, a two million tonnes per annum aluminium smelter and a downstream aluminium park with a capacity of around one million tonnes per annum. The project will also include a 4,000 MW captive power plant supported by a 400 MW green energy component. —*ANI*

Google loses $4.7B antitrust battle with EU

LUXEMBOURG CITY, 2 JULY

In a jolt to Alphabet's Google, the European Court of Justice has upheld the imposition of a penalty on the tech giant for anti-competitive practices relating to its Android operating system.

The penalty amounting to USD 4.67 billion was trimmed in 2022 by the General Court. The fine was imposed by the European Commission eight years ago in 2018 for exploiting its dominant position in the mobile operating system to block rivals and promote its own apps.

"The Court of Justice dismisses the appeal brought by Google and Alphabet against that judgment of the General Court, thereby confirming the penalty imposed on them, as revised by the General Court, for their anti-competitive practices relating to the Android operating system," the ECJ said.

The European Commission, in its decision, had concluded that the search engine giant, through pre-installation agreements and licencing conditions for certain apps, had promoted its search engine and Google Chrome app on smartphones that run on the Android operating system, which is also run by Google.

In its 2022 verdict, the lower tribunal had confirmed the European Commission's decision that Google imposed unlawful curbs on smartphone makers that used its Android operating system in pursuit of cementing its presence in the search engine market.

The case dates back nearly a decade, when the Commission initiated a procedure on 15 April, 2015 against Google on the basis of a clutch of complaints regarding some of its business practices in the mobile internet market. — *ANI*

Zee to raise Rs 3,144 cr via warrants from promoter group

NEW DELHI, 2 JULY

The board of Zee Entertainment Enterprises Ltd (ZEEL) has approved raising up to Rs 3,143.51 crore through the issuance of fully convertible warrants to promoter group entity Sunbright Mauritius Investments. The board approved a preferential allotment of up to 24.95 crore warrants at an issue price of Rs 126 per warrant, a regulatory filing said.

As of March 2026, the promoter group held a 3.99 per cent stake in ZEEL. This fundraise will increase Sunbright's stake in ZEEL. Each warrant, with a face value of Re 1, will be convertible into one fully paid-up share within 18 months of allotment. The company stated the allottee will pay 25 per cent upfront, with the remaining 75 per cent payable upon exercise.

Upon full conversion, warrants could comprise up to 20 per cent of ZEEL's fully diluted share capital.

The Rs 126 issue price represents an 11.86 per cent premium to SEBI regulation price and a 16.33 per cent premium over NSE's closing price on 1 July. —*PTI*

FIRSTCRY'S SWARA BABY FILES FOR RS 1,000 CR

NEW DELHI, 2 JULY

Swara Baby Products, a contract manufacturer of baby diapers, adult diapers and feminine hygiene products backed by FirstCry, on Thursday filed draft papers with markets regulator Sebi to raise Rs 1,000 crore through an initial public offering (IPO).

The proposed IPO comprises a fresh issue of equity shares aggregating up to Rs 500 crore and an offer for sale (OFS) valued at Rs 500 crore by promoters, according to the draft red herring prospectus (DRHP).

The OFS includes sale of shares worth up to Rs 300 crore by Brainbees Solutions Ltd, the parent company of FirstCry, and up to Rs 200 crore by Anadya Bon Merchari LLP.

The company proposes to utilise the net proceeds from the fresh issue to set up a new manufacturing facility in Madhya Pradesh with an allocation of Rs 198.2 crore, repay or prepay loans amounting to Rs 100 crore, and invest Rs 27.5 crore in subsidiaries Solis Hygiene, Swara Hygiene and K.A. Enterprises Hygiene Pvt Ltd (KAEHPL) for repayment of their outstanding dues.

Additionally, the funds will be used to pursue inorganic growth through acquisitions and for general corporate purposes.

Swara Baby may also undertake a pre-IPO placement of up to Rs 100 crore. —*PTI*

FPIs pull out Rs 49,340 cr from India in June

NEW DELHI, 2 JULY

Foreign Portfolio Investors (FPIs) extended their selling streak in June, withdrawing Rs 49,340 crore from equities amid global risk aversion, higher US bond yields, a preference for developed markets and stretched domestic valuations.

According to Central Depository Services (India) Ltd (CDSL) data, cumulative FPI outflows in 2026 have reached Rs 2.7 lakh crore, surpassing the Rs 1.66 lakh crore withdrawn during the whole of 2025. FPIs were net sellers in every month this year except February, when they invested Rs 22,615 crore after outflows of Rs 35,962 crore in January. Selling resumed with a record Rs 1.17 lakh crore withdrawal in March, followed by Rs 60,847 crore in April, Rs 32,963 crore in May and Rs 49,340 crore in June.

Morningstar's Himanshu Srivastava said early-June outflows reflected global risk aversion, although easing geopolitical tensions and softer crude prices later moderated selling.

To attract overseas capital, the RBI announced measures to improve foreign investment. Meanwhile, FPIs invested Rs 21,652 crore through the Fully Accessible Route and Rs 3,246 crore via the voluntary retention route in June. —*PTI*

Stock markets rise for 2nd day, Sensex climbs 579 points

MUMBAI, 2 JULY

Stock market benchmark indices Sensex and Nifty ended nearly one per cent higher on Thursday amid softer crude oil prices, positive geopolitical developments and buying in blue-chip IT stocks. The 30-share BSE Sensex rose 579.48 points, or 0.75 per cent, to close at 77,502.12, after touching 77,578.93 during the session, while the NSE Nifty gained 169.85 points, or 0.71 per cent, to settle at 24,175.70.

Infosys, Tech Mahindra, Tata Consultancy Services and HCL Tech led the gains, whereas Larsen & Toubro, Maruti Suzuki India, Axis Bank and Reliance Industries lagged. Brent crude fell 1.45 per cent to USD 70.53 a barrel. India and Japan unveiled initiatives covering economic security, artificial intelligence, defence technology and energy.

"Indian equities extended their winning streak despite pressure in global markets," said Ponmudi R. Ajit Mishra said, "The rebound in the IT pack further strengthened sentiment." Vinod Nair said easing Strait of Hormuz tensions and dovish Federal Reserve remarks supported markets. FIIs sold Rs 1,140.50 crore worth of equities on Wednesday. —*PTI*

GST on ride-hailing apps could reduce driver earnings

NEW DELHI, 2 JULY

Extending GST liability to subscription-based ride-hailing platforms such as Rapido and Bharat Taxi could negatively impact driver earnings, curb participation, and weaken passenger demand, an Esya Centre report warned. The study, based on over 2,100 drivers and passengers across 13 cities, examines SaaS models where drivers pay a fixed fee for access to customers and negotiate fares directly.

This contrasts with commission-based platforms like Uber and Ola, which set fares, collect payments, and deduct commissions before paying drivers. Under India's GST framework, passenger transport services via e-commerce operators are subject to Section 9(5) of the GST Act, shifting tax liability to platforms for certain services.

The report noted challenges in applying this to subscription models, as such platforms neither determine fares nor handle payments. Most drivers, earning below Rs 20 lakh annually, are liable for GST. The rise of subscription models has created regulatory ambiguity, with differing rulings by authorities, including in Karnataka.

Strong driver preference for subscription platforms, citing predictable costs and higher earnings, was highlighted. The report warned that a 5 per cent GST could reduce driver income and demand, risking a shift to informal transport channels. It recommended clarifying GST rules to support competition and maintain tax neutrality. —*PTI*

HYDERABAD-BASED SKYROOT

Vikram-1, India's 1st private rocket, set to launch by 4 Aug

NEW DELHI, 2 JULY

Hyderabad-based Skyroot Aerospace has announced a launch window between 12 July and 4 August for the maiden test flight of Vikram-1, India's first privately developed orbital-class launch vehicle.

The fully assembled rocket has been unveiled at the Satish Dhawan Space Centre in Sriharikota, with the final launch date subject to the completion of assembly and testing, weather conditions, safety checks and range clearance.

Named Agaman, the mission will collect critical data on propulsion, stage separation, guidance, navigation, control systems and overall vehicle performance.

Named after Dr Vikram Sarabhai, the father of India's space programme,

- Named Agaman, the mission will collect critical data on propulsion, stage separation, guidance, navigation, control systems and overall vehicle performance.

Vikram-1 is a seven-storey-high, multi-stage rocket built with an all-carbon composite structure. It is powered by propulsion systems developed entirely in-house, including 3D-printed engines and high-thrust solid-fuel boosters. Designed for the small satellite market, it can carry payloads of up to 350kg into Low Earth Orbit. The maiden mission aims to place a satellite into a 450km orbit with a 60-degree inclination.

The launch will mark Skyroot's second mission after Vikram-S became the first privately built rocket to reach space from Indian soil in November 2022.

Founded by former ISRO scientists Pawan Kumar Chandana and Naga Bharath Daka, Skyroot has emerged as India's first space technology unicorn, valued at more than $1.1 billion. Its rapid growth reflects the opening up of India's space sector to private companies.

The extensive use of advanced manufacturing technologies, particularly 3D-printed rocket engines, is expected to reduce production costs, shorten manufacturing timelines and improve design flexibility, underlining the growing technological capabilities of India's private space industry. —*PTI*

India's first privately developed orbital-class rocket Vikram-1 sits on a launch pad at the Satish Dhawan Space Centre in Sriharikota, Andhra —*ANI*

OpenAI in talks to give 5% stake to US govt

SAN FRANCISCO, 2 JULY

OpenAI is reportedly in early-stage talks to give the US government a 5 per cent stake in the ChatGPT developer, as artificial intelligence firms seek to strengthen ties with President Donald Trump's administration.

According to the Financial Times, OpenAI Chief Executive Sam Altman believes giving the public a financial stake is the best way to share the benefits of AI. The proposal could see other leading AI firms, including Anthropic, Google and Meta, offer similar stakes through a public investment vehicle, although no agreements have been reached.

The talks come as Washington increases scrutiny of AI companies.

Anthropic recently restored access to its latest model after addressing US government security concerns that had temporarily restricted availability.

OpenAI and Anthropic have previously floated the idea of a public wealth fund to distribute AI-generated wealth more broadly. Both companies are also preparing for potential US stock market listings that some investors believe could value them at more than $1 trillion.

Separately, reports have claimed Anthropic faced mounting pressure from the Trump administration, including demands over government use of its AI systems, legal disputes and temporary restrictions on advanced models before reaching an agreement with US authorities to strengthen security safeguards. —*Agencies*

England's Harry Kane celebrates scoring his side's second goal against Congo —PTI

Records tumble for HARRY KANE as he sends England into the Round of 16

ATLANTA, 2 JULY

Records continue to tumble for England captain Harry Kane as he became just the second player to score 20 or more goals across both the FIFA WC and the Euro Championships. This honour came following his match-winning brace in a crucial round of 32 clash in the FIFA World Cup against DR Congo.

Harry's goal count across the FIFA World Cup and the Euro has touched 20, with 13 coming in the World Cup and seven in the Euro Championships. Only the Portugal icon Cristiano Ronaldo (10 FIFA WC goals and 14 Euro goals) has done better with 24 goals.

Further solidifying his legacy as one of the most clutch players of this decade in European football, Kane completed 10 knockout goals in major tournaments (FIFA+ Euro) by European players since Euro 2020, with Kylian Mbappe (7), Dani Olmo, Kasper Dolberg and Goncalo Ramos (3) trailing him.

On Wednesday, a late-stage Harry Kane masterclass, with goals in the 75th and 86th minutes, sunk DR Congo, who dominated a large chunk of the match after Brian Cipenka's opener in the seventh minute. Now, they will be travelling to Mexico for their Round of 16 clash against Mexico, on Monday.

Kane etched his name deeper into FIFA World Cup history by overtaking Brazilian legend Pele's World Cup goal tally as his late brace inspired a dramatic 2-1 victory over Congo DR. With his two strikes, he has 13 FIFA World Cup goals, one more than Pele.

Kane also surpassed Geoff Hurst (4 goals) for the second-most FIFA WC knockout goals for England, with five. Only Gary Lineker (six) has more FIFA goals than Kane. However, Kane (13) has surpassed Lineker's 10 goals.

A tough Mexico test awaits England at the iconic Azteca Stadium on 6 July. —*ANI*

Balogun gets US goal against Bosnia, & red card

SANTA CLARA, 2 JULY

Folarin Balogun's night in the World Cup's Round of 32 was a roller coaster of emotions.

It began with his third goal of the tournament to put the United States in the lead against Bosnia-Herzegovina and ended prematurely when he was given a red card early in the second half that will force him to miss the next game.

"It's so unfortunate honestly," teammate Christian Pulisic said following Wednesday's 2-0 win. "It just seems so harsh for us to get that. He's done so much for us, and now we got his back. If he has to miss the next game, it's just ridiculous for something like that."

Balogun celebrated a goal with The Silencer move used by the NBA's LeBron James — twice — but the first time he put the ball in the net the goal was disallowed for offside.

He received a red card from Brazilian referee Raphael Claus for stepping on Tarik Muharemovic's right ankle. Claus didn't initially signal a card but showed Balogun red after a video review.

"It never was intentional," US coach Mauricio Pochettino said. "It's never a red card. Never. ... If the intention is to damage the opponent, OK, I understand. But that never was. It was a normal action in football that you are fighting for the ball and your feet land."

Referee Raphael Claus of Brazil shows a red card to United States' Folarin Balogun, right, during the World Cup round of 32 soccer match between the United States and Bosnia in Santa Clara. —PTI

Balogun became the third player to score and be sent off in a World Cup knockout game after Brazil's Ronaldinho in a 2002 quarterfinal against England and France's Zinedine Zidane in the 2006 final against Italy. "Pretty cool record, huh," teammate Chris Richards said.

Balogun has to serve an automatic one-game suspension for Monday's Round of 16 game against Belgium. There is no appeal process for a red card suspension unless FIFA assesses a penalty of more than one game.

Balogun was consoled on the field by Pulisic and Bosnian defender Sead Kolasinac following the decision and did come back out to celebrate with his teammates after the game. He even shook hands with the officials despite the call that went against him. — *PTI*

Belgium comes back from two goals down to beat Senegal 3-2

SEATTLE, 2 JULY

Belgium overturned a two-goal deficit and scored from the penalty spot deep into extra time to beat Senegal 3-2 on Wednesday in the biggest comeback of the World Cup so far.

Senegal held a 2-0 lead with just 5 minutes of regulation time remaining but late goals by Romelu Lukaku and Youri Tielemans pushed the Round of 32 match into extra time.

Tielemans completed Belgium's comeback by converting a penalty in the 125th minute of the game – the latest goal in World Cup history.

"Being part of this comeback is a proud moment

because I scored the last two goals to give the team the win today. I'm very proud of that to be able to help the team to score goals and bring us over the line," Tielemans said.

He was fouled with only seconds to go and with a penalty shootout looming, and the referee awarded the spot kick after a video review, ignoring protests from the Senegal team.

"I do not want to interpret the decision. We all have different interpretations when it comes to awarding a penalty," Senegal coach Pape Thiaw said. "I'd rather not comment, not interpreting the referee's decision."

The win for Belgium marked the second time in the last 11 World Cups that a team trailed by two or more goals in the knockout round and advanced. Belgium also did so in a 3-2 victory over Japan in the round of 16 at the 2018 tournament."Senegal deserved to win," Belgium coach Rudi Garcia said. "But, I am happy it was us."

The Belgians will next face the United States on Monday in Seattle. —*ANI*

Pape Gueye announces 'break' from Senegal team post WC exit

SEATTLE, 2 JULY

Senegal and Villarreal defensive midfielder Pape Gueye announced that he is taking a break from the national side as long as the current technical staff stays in charge, showing the first signs of tensions within the team after a heartbreaking loss to Belgium in their round of 32 clash on Wednesday.

Senegal appeared to be cruising towards a place in the last 16 after establishing a two-goal lead against Belgium in Seattle before suffering one of the tournament's most dramatic collapses. After Senegal established a two-goal lead by the 51st minute, Romelu Lukaku (86th minute) and Youri Tielemans (89th minute) changed the course of the game, taking it to extra time.

Tielemans took the penalty after the VAR review awarded his team one for Lamine Camara's foul on Tielemans, sealing one of the tournament's most dramatic victories and rewriting the World Cup record books.

Taking to Instagram, Gueye wrote in his local language, translating to, "I will come back later to talk about the elimination. But, right now, I am announcing that, as long as this technical staff remains in charge, I will be taking a break from the National Team."

Gueye was substituted after an hour of action, with the manager Pape Thiaw bringing in Lamine Camara.

He had been the team's standout performer in the tournament with three goals and an assist, earning a 'Player of the Match' against Iraq in a 5-0 win.

Despite the defeat, Senegal also achieved a significant milestone by becoming the first African nation to score 10 goals in a single edition of the FIFA World Cup. —*ANI*

The English side's second goal against Congo —PTI

ROUND OF 32

Will Ronaldo break his goalless knockout run?

TORONTO, 2 JULY

Portugal icon Cristiano Ronaldo will be aiming to remove one massive stain from his resume as his side takes on Croatia in the Round of 32 of the ongoing FIFA World Cup, with the superstar yet to score a goal in a FIFA World Cup knockout match.

The Portugal-Croatia clash will mark a battle between Cristiano and Luka Modric, both of whom have worn the colours of Real Madrid for years together.

However, Cristiano, despite having scored in six successive FIFA World Cups from his debut tournament in 2006 till now, is yet to score in a knockout match for Portugal in the tournament.

During the match against Colombia, the 41-year-old Portugal captain made his 25th FIFA World Cup appearance, drawing level with Germany great Lothar Matthaus for the second-most appearances in the tournament's history. Only Argentina captain Lionel Messi, with 29 appearances, has featured in more World Cup matches than Ronaldo.

During the match against Uzbekistan, Ronaldo led Portugal's charge with two goals, while Nuno Mendes and Rafael Leao also found the net. An own goal involving Uzbekistan goalkeeper Abduvohid Nematov further compounded the misery for Fabio Cannavaro's side as Roberto Martinez's men secured their first win of the tournament in emphatic fashion. Ronaldo's brace saw him become Portugal's all-time leading scorer in FIFA World Cup history, taking his tally to 10 goals, surpassing Eusebio's record of nine. Eusebio, a Portuguese legend and 1965 Ballon d'Or winner, guided the team to third place at the 1966 World Cup. Behind Ronaldo and Eusebio, Pauleta is third on Portugal's World Cup list.

Ronaldo also became the first player to score in six different FIFA World Cup tournaments, ending his 10-match goalless streak across major competitions (the FIFA World Cup and the Euro Championship). —*ANI*

Shreyas, Abhishek shine with fifties before rain ends game

CHESTER-LE-STREET, 2 JULY

Abhishek Sharma's dynamic 59 and skipper Shreyas Iyer's composed 68 helped India gain a slice of positivity despite their first T20I against England getting abandoned because of incessant rains here on Wednesday.

Their fifties helped India post a competitive 189 for seven, a noticeable change in their batting fortunes after churning out two underwhelming efforts against Ireland in the 0-2 series defeat.

England's chase of 190 remained a non-starter after the heavens opened up during the innings break.

The second contest of the five-match series will be played at Manchester on 4 July.

But the beginning of the tourists' innings was anything but rosy. to bat.

The T20I world champions lost Sanju Samson, who drove Saqib Mahmood (3/33) to Tom Banton at point, and Ishan Kishan with just six runs on the board. Kishan was run out after a mix-up with Abhishek, a mirror image of his dismissal in the second T20I against Ireland at Belfast recently.

At that time, the Indian camp might have briefly revisited their recent batting travails against Ireland in a 0-2 series defeat. But those fleeting worries were soon eased once Abhishek slipped into his groove.

The 25-year-old smashed England quick for a hat-trick of fours as India piled up an impressive 61. Abhishek did not take his feet off the pedal even after the powerplay, and fetched his fifty off just 20 balls. But he did not last as Sam trapped him in front of the wicket as the batter remained stranded on back-foot. —PTI

CRICKET IN OLYMPIC GAMES

ICC hails Shah Rukh after unveiling of LA2028 venue

DUBAI , 2 JULY

International Cricket Council (ICC) chairman Jay Shah congratulated actor Shah Rukh Khan as he and his Knight Riders Group (KRG) officially unveiled a new world-class cricket stadium at the Fairplex in Pomona, Los Angeles, California.

The new venue is set to host cricket matches during the Los Angeles 2028 Olympic Games.

Posting on X, Shah said, "Congratulations @iamsrk. This is a key milestone in Cricket's return to the Olympics, made possible by the collaboration between the @LA_KnightRiders, @la28 and @icc. Growing cricket around the world is a collective effort, and initiatives such as this one help create new ecosystems for fans and players, which fuel this growth. I wish you the best and look forward to being on the journey ahead with you."

The venue that will host cricket's historic return to the Summer Olympics during the 2028 Los Angeles edition hosted its first-ever cricket match on Thursday. The new Knight Riders Cricket Ground in Pomona, California, hosted the Major League Cricket (MLC) match between the home team, Los Angeles Knight Riders and Washington Freedom. The match saw one-time MLC champions WSF chase down 109 runs, courtesy of Steve Smith (40*) and Mark Chapman (34). Pacer Netrawalkar (3/16) was the standout bowler for WSF.

The venue is hosting seven matches in the 2026 edition of MLC and will serve as the cricket venue for the LA Olympics. It features eight wickets on the main square, with ICC standard playing dimensions adhered to.

Cricket is set to return to the Olympic Games at LA28, marking its first appearance in 128 years since it was last featured at the Paris 1900 Olympics. The event will include men's and women's T20 competitions, with six teams in each category. The approval marks another milestone in the LA Games qualification process, with qualification systems for 49 sports having been endorsed since December 2025. —*ANI*

WIMBLEDON

Djokovic enters 3rd round with win over Tsitsipas

LONDON, 2 JULY

Serbian tennis icon Novak Djokovic secured a straight-sets win over Greek star Stefanos Tsitsipas to secure his spot in the third round of Wimbledon on Wednesday.

Djokovic, chasing his 25th Grand Slam title and first since the US Open 2023, outclassed Tsitsipas 6-3, 6-4, 6-2, securing his third-round spot in the grass major for the 20th time with an all-round sharp outing. He also improved his head-to-head record against Tsitsipas to 13-2.

Moving towards the win, Djokovic managed to produce a fantastic performance, breaking Tsitsipas's serve and striking three winners to end the game, including a classy lob that dropped perfectly inside the baseline, concluding the game in one hour and 38 minutes.

"You feel very happy, satisfied and joyful on the court when you are playing this way," Djokovic said in his on-court interview. "Once you get the momentum going. That game, when I went 5-2 up, was one of the best games I have played in a while," he added. Tsitsipas arrived at the tournament as the 87th-ranked player. Djokovic's 33 winners and seven unforced errors gave him dominance as he did not surrender his serve throughout the match, booking a clash with Frenchman Arthur Rinderknech. —*ANI*

Novak Djokovic of Serbia returns the ball to Stefanos Tsitsipas of Greece in their second round men's singles match at the Wimbledon Tennis Championships in London —PTI